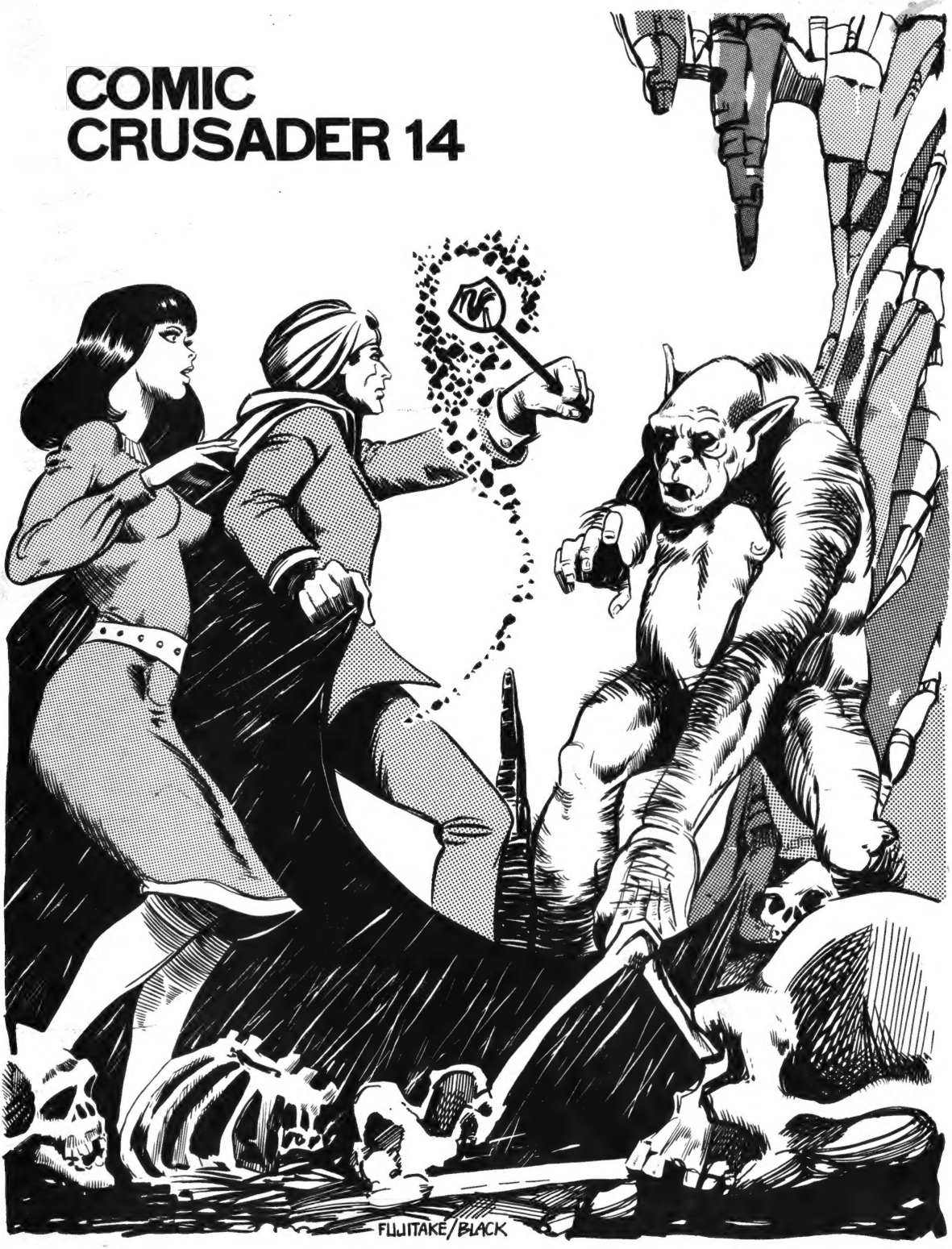
COMIC CRUSADER 14



CRUSADER COMMENTS

BEHOLD THE WORLD OF MAGIC!

This is the theme that motivates the 14th issue of COMIC CRUSADER!

For the first time, and I hope not the last, we have RAYMOND MILLER with us. Ray has undertaken the monumental task of documenting the history of Fawcett Publication's man of magic...IBIS the INVINCIBLE. To illustrate this fine article, some of the finest artists in fandom have submitted their work for your approval...Don Newton, Keith Fukumitsu, Gary Kato, myself and Dennis Fujitake. Dennis also took time out from a busy schedule to do this issue's cover, which Bill Black inked. My thanks to all of them.

Speaking of covers, this issues back cover came about as a result of my reacquaintance with two of the nicest people in or out of fandom... Richard and Wendy Pini. Wendy, as many of you may know, is the former Wendy Fletcher and I'm very pleased to present her fine work here in Comic Crusader. Wendy is also a special favorite of my daughter Jolene. After she and Richard last paid us a visit Jolene walked around for days saying, "Wendy, Wendy, Wendy."

In this issues interview with Mandrake the Magician's artist, FRED FREDERICKS, you will find some art by a new addition to the Comic Crusader staff. His name is Tom Armstrong. Tom is a devotee of the graphic media and I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot more of his work. Hopefully in C.C.!

Recently TOM FAGAN introduced me to a series that just overwhelmed me. Without a doubt, the Mr. Mystic series has to be one of the most beautifully written and drawn series ever produced. Tom has done what I consider one of the best articles ever on a certain phase of the Mr. Mystic adventures. This article is an outstanding piece of work on Tom's part and I really enjoyed illustrating it!

A while back, some of you may have heard that STEVE DITKO was once again creating something for D.C. Plans fell through at National, but Steve went ahead with his idea anyway. The result is Part 1 of this issue's Steve Ditko "M" series. Steve's hero believes that you don't have to wear the same costume all the time to be effective...rather, a certain kind of costume for a certain kind of job. I'm really pleased to be featuring the initial episodes here.

BOB COSGROVE's work speaks for itself and in this issue it speaks quite well! Bob returned home from college long enough to turn out two fine pieces. One on Black Magic and the other on "The Art Of Pencilling." His pencilling article is an introduction to this issue's special pencil page treat...Two pages of fantastic work by JACK KIRBY and a beautiful rendering by JIM STERANKO!

Put an Anthony Kowalik, Comic Chatter logo, and art by Fred Fredericks, Wayne Pond, and Bruce Patterson together and you have the rest of this magic oriented issue.

Magic has been around in comics since 1934, when Mandrake the Magician was created by Lee Falk. Since then magicians have roamed throughout comics from Balbo, the Boy Magician to Zatara. This issue is dedicated to them!

Hope you enjoy the issue.

Best -

Martin L. Greim

NEWTON

T'WAS JUST OVER 4,000 YEARS AGO IN ANCIENT EGYPT THAT THE BLACK PHAROAH TOOK IT TO MIND THAT ALL EGYPTIANS SHOULD BE SLAVES SAVE ONE, HE!
THUS, THRU MESA, HIS FALSE PROPHET, THE AMBITIOUS PHAROAH ENLISTED THE AID OF SET, GOD OF THE INFERNO, AND HIS DEMON ARMY!
HOWEVER, WHEN THE EVIL MONARCH ATTEMPTED TO INITIATE HIS RULE, A SPONTANEOUS REVOLUTION ERUPTED, LED BY PRINCE AMENTEP OR
IBIS!
BUT THE DEMON ARMY OF SET CRUSHED THE UPRISING! THE PEOPLE WERE ENSLAVED AND IBIS WAS CAST INTO A DUNGEON!
THE PHAROAH'S EVIL DESIRE INCLUDED THE BEAUTIFUL TAIA, IBIS' BELOVED! THE CRUEL RULER HAD HER BROUGHT TO HIM!
IBIS, HAVING PROVED HIMSELF DURING THE REVOLT, WAS SLIPPED THE...
IBIS STICK
BY HIS UNCLE! A LITTLE PRACTICE AND IBIS WAS READY TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF THE BLACK PHAROAH!

WITH THE AID OF THE ENCHANTED IBIS STICK IBIS FREED THE ENSLAVED EGYPTIANS AND CRUSHED THE DEADLY DEMON HOARDE!
FORSEEING INEVITABLE DEFEAT SET DESERTS THE BLACK MONARCH! WITHOUT THE INTERFERENCE OF SET IBIS RUSHES TO THE PALACE AND CONFRONTS THE PHAROAH! DURING THEIR DUEL ONE OF THE PHAROAH'S EVIL HENCHMEN ATTEMPTS TO SLAY IBIS, ONLY, TAIA SACRIFICES HERSELF!
UNABLE TO RAISE HER WITH THE IBIS STICK THE BROKEN HEARTED IBIS WAS INFORMED THAT THE ARROW WAS DRUGGED AND THAT TAIA WOULD SLEEP FOR 4,000 YEARS! THUS, THE YOUNG PRINCE INTERRED HIMSELF WITH TAIA USING A SPELL THAT WOULD ALLOW HIM TO AWAKEN WITH HIS LOVE! TO ARISE AGAIN IN THE 20TH CENTURY!
FINI

IBIS

by

Raymond Miller

art by
Greim, Fukumitsu, Fujitake and Kato

As everyone knows, the most popular type of comic book character of the late 30's and early 40's was the super or costume hero. But how many of our readers are aware that during this same period there was another very popular group of characters? This group was the Magicians, and almost every publisher carried at least one on their roster of stars. DC had Zatara, Sargon and Lando. MLJ had Zambini and Kardak. Fox had Zanzibar and Yarko. Timely went with Dakor Master Magician, Merzak the Mystic and Monako. Quality had Merlin and Tor the Magic Master and Fawcett had Balbo, El Carim (Miracle spelled backwards), and the most famous of all - PRINCE IBIS the INVINCIBLE.

Ibis made his debut, along with other Whiz main stays Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, Golden Arrow and Lance O'Casey, in Whiz Comics #1, Feb. 1940. (Ed.Note... Actually, even though this was the first published issue of Whiz, its number was #2. The first issue never saw sale on the stands. That issue was a black and white "ashcan" issue, used for the purpose of securing copyrights. However, copyrights were not secured with this issue, because Fawcett executives decided to change the name of the lead feature from Capt. Thunder to Capt. Marvel and the #1 issue was junked. A second issue was then readied and this was numbered #2.) Ibis, like Spy Smasher, was featured in long continuous serial, with each story ending in a cliff hanger like the old Hollywood Movie Serials. In Ibis' case, the continued stories were to last thru Whiz #26.

There really wasn't much of an origin in the first Ibis story. The reader would find the story starting with the mummy of Ibis awaking in an American museum where, with the Ibistick, he begins a search for Taia. Before we go any further with the story, let us jump ahead more than two years to the first issue of Ibis Comics, 1942 for the complete origin.

Ibis had his beginning in ancient Egypt, 4,000 years ago. Prince Ibis, also known as Prince AMENTEP, had been taught much wisdom by his uncle, Osiris, God of Justice and he longed for the power his uncle promised him so he could not only do good for the people, but be worthy of his loved one...The Princess Taia. However, Osiris tells Ibis the power could not be his until he had proven himself in a crisis. Meanwhile, the cruel Black Pharoah also had eyes for the lovely Princess Taia. The Black Pharoah had just inherited the crown of Egypt and had planned to put an end to freedom the Egyptians had been having. With the aid of his Chief Advisor MESU, the Evil Dwellers of the Depths (evil Gods with heads of animals) led by SET, the Master of Inferno, were summoned to help him enslave the Egyptians and win Taia for himself. The Black Pharoah then summoned all the men before him, and told the Egyptians in so many words, that freedom was over for them and that their first task was to build him the greatest pyramid of all time and let no one stand against him. Prince Ibis led the Egyptians in a revolt, but found they were no match for Set and his Dwellers of the Depths. The rebels are felled by a rain of arrows and Ibis is left alone. He is soon subdued and thrown into a dungeon. With no leader, the Egyptians are slaves of the Black Pharoah and start work on the great pyramid. At the same time, Taia is dragged to the Pharoah's quarters. Meanwhile a very weak Ibis lies in his dungeon prison. But unnoticed by the prison guards, Osiris appears at the window of Ibis' cell and tells him he has proven his courage and the power is now his...The Power of the Ibistick! The Ibistick, which was the source of the greatest magic ever, had one flaw; it would not work against other magic. Ibis first commands the Ibistick to set him free, then orders it to complete the great pyramid. He then frees the slaves and they attack the Dwellers of the Depths, who being evil and cowardly cannot stand against a brave attack and vanish back to where they came from. During the revolt, Set appears before the Black Pharoah and warns him that his time is running out and that someone had learned the secret of his evil and in a puff of smoke returns to Inferno. Minutes later Ibis breaks into the Throne Room where the Black Pharoah, Mesu and Taia stand. In a sword battle Ibis slays the Pharoah and in revenge Mesu shoots an arrow at Ibis only to hit Taia who throws her body in front of Ibis and takes the arrow in her heart. Mesu in turn is quickly beheaded by Ibis' sword. Osiris arrives to find the dead Taia in Ibis' arms and to hear Ibis command the Ibistick to strike him dead. But nothing happens, since the Ibistick will do no harm to its master and Ibis learns from Osiris that in the hand of an enemy who seeks to harm him, the Ibistick will only do harm to the one who orders it. Osiris then explains to Ibis that the Taia is not really dead. Mesu's arrow has only put her to sleep for 4,000 years. Upon learning this, Ibis commands the Ibistick to put him to sleep for the same length of time. We are now up to the time where the first Ibis story begins. Prince Ibis awakens in an American Museum and after the Ibistick has dressed him in modern clothes, he goes forth to locate Taia whom he finds in a museum in the land of his birth - Egypt. The origin story in Ibis #1 ends.

This complete origin tale was written by Otto Binder. Editor, Martin Greim recently talked to Mr. Binder and gleaned a bit of information about the man of magic's creation.

In 1939 Bill Parker became Fawcett's first comic book editor. He had selected several adventure themes to be used in Whiz and a magician theme was one of them. His was the original story line! However, it is Mr. Binder's belief that Ed Herron, who took Parker's place in 1940, did the most to guide the story line. Otto related a humorous anecdote regarding his re-write of Ibis' origin. Ed Herron called him in and told him they were coming out with an Ibis book and that he was to re-write the origin. When Otto asked for some information on the character, the only reply

was, "Oh, it has to do with Egypt and a magician!" When asked about Tnia, Otto explained that she was in the stories for window dressing - nothing more!

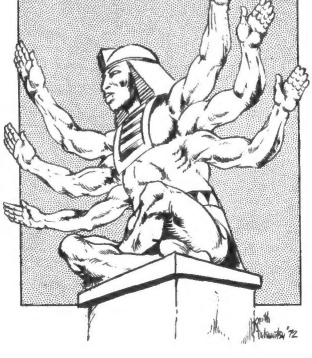
It should be noted that Ibis' origin was added to again in an issue of his own book. How Ibis received his Ibistick from a statue of the Egyptian God THOTH. Thoth was a real Egyptian God too. He was the god of wisdom and magic.

Back to the first Whiz adventure. The story has no real organized plot. It just has Ibis doing good, like restoring a bombed out city. The story ends with a thief stealing the Ibistick and leaving Tnia in a glass case. In the 2nd issue of Whiz, Ibis follows the thief and after some degree of trouble, traps him. The thief ordered the Ibistick to turn Ibis into gold, but since the Ibistick will never harm its master, the thief instead is turned to gold. Ibis then rushes back in time to save Tnia from her tight glass case. In Ibis' 3rd adventure he defeats King Semwosri, who had returned to life and intended to punish the explorers who had disturbed his tomb and in #4 they go to the aid of some boys who had been mistreated and who were slaves to a bunch of crooks lead by Murder Malone. Malone captures Tnia and takes her away, bound and gagged in an airplane. In the 5th story the Ibistick creates an airplane and Ibis follows them. Again, the Ibistick backfires, as Malone orders it to turn Ibis into a toad after stealing it. It is rumored that Malone is still waiting for a princess to kiss him. Next the Ibistick is accidentally dropped out of a window of an autogyro and in #6 into the hands of an old fisherman who gives it to his nephew. Before long, it falls into the hands of a hobo and the Ibistick turns him into a power mad millionaire, complete with mansion. By the time Ibis and Tnia locate the hobo, he wants to be Emperor of the World. However, he is turned into a block of ice, when he orders the Ibistick to do so to Ibis.

The next few issues are important, as they introduce a regular to the Ibis cast of characters. In Whiz #7 thru #13 Ibis and Tnia go to a carnival where they save a young boy named Tommy and take him to Hollywood where he ends up a kidnap victim. Tommy will be in quite a few of the coming Ibis adventures. Searching for Tommy, Ibis has the Ibistick stolen by Carl Brand who is using Tommy so Ibis will sign the ownership of the Ibistick over to him. When the police and Ibis finally catch up to Brand, he convinces the police that Ibis stole the Ibistick from him and Ibis and Tommy go to jail. While they languish in jail, Brand in turn makes off with Tnia. In a crystal ball Piang the Terrible sees all this and wants to use Tnia to give him the secret of life. Brand refuses to turn Tnia over to him and Piang kills him. However, in the end, Ibis and Tommy save Tnia and Piang is defeated.

It seems the Ibistick was out of Ibis' possession more than it was in it. Ibis loses it this time to Grom

Thoth



Trug

Deeters, a convict who orders the Ibistick to take him to Egypt where he brings a Sphinx to life. However, in the end Ibis recovers the Ibistick and defeats the convict. Meanwhile Tommy is having troubles in a military school with Mrs. Zorn, cannibals and a professor. In the end, we find the Professor rescuing Mrs. Zorn from the Cannibals and falling in love with her. Finally, Ibis and Tnia return to the Military School and to Tommy.

In issue #13 Ibis meets TRUG, an oriental criminal who also has magic powers. Trug is the first major villain to confront Ibis and he'll plague him for a number of issues. Trug uses his magic on Tommy to steal the Ibistick and when he's confronted with Ibis, he takes Tnia, the Ibistick and vanishes into the air. In issue #14 Trug and Tnia end up in the far north. Using a crystal ball, Ibis is able to locate Trug's castle. As he nears the castle, Trug orders his planes to destroy Ibis, but they bomb his castle instead. As Tnia drags the half dead Trug to safety, one of his men gets the Ibistick. The man becomes a giant and puts Tnia and Trug in jail while he fights Ibis. Ibis defeats him and recovers the Ibistick. He then restores the giant to normal and they become friends. Ibis goes about rescuing Tnia and turns Trug into a statue of marble. For the moment Trug is out of the way. Ibis' next foe is a jewel expert named Rimsan. Rimsan steals a ruby the Eskimos gave Ibis, but he recovers it with the use of the Ibistick. However, as Ibis and Tnia drive off Rimsan shoots the tires and their car goes over a cliff. In issue #15 the Ibistick saves them and eventually Rimsan is killed. Returning to the north, Ibis discovers a tribe has taken Trug's statue and placed Ibis' friendly tribe in slavery. Ibis is forced to restore Trug to life and the Eskimos think Trug is a god. They change their minds when Ibis battles Trug and defeats him. After this, the two tribes become friends and Trug swears vengence on Ibis.

The art in issues 2-6, 8-15 appear to be done by the same artist (Beck/Costanza) while the art in #7 is different. In #7 the title logo and general appearance of the whole strip is different. The title logo is also different in issue #8.

Ibis and Tnia continue their battle with Trug thru Whiz #20. After helping an old lady find her missing son, Ibis and Tnia return to the Military School to visit Tommy only to discover he is missing...Trug has kidnapped him! With the aid of the Ibistick, Ibis and

Taia traced Trug and Tommy to a remote mountain, only to come up against a 4 armed Demon. By now Ibis and Taia are in such an evil location that the Ibistick only has power enough to save one person, so they save Tommy and send him back to the Academy. Powerless, Ibis and Taia are tied to the legs of giant birds and flown to a castle high above the clouds where they are imprisoned by a giant. However, with a group of small people like themselves, they manage to break free and escape. Ibis climbs up a cable, only to discover that it is a great spider web. He is attacked by the spider and is saved from certain death by a wasp who attacks the spider. Ibis then defeats the giant by turning him into a normal sized man and returns to New York. Trug is still up to no good and is now working with the Devil. In a fight, Ibis beats the Devil who turns out to be Trug in disguise. Ibis' battles with Trug end here, as he seals him in a cave forever. Now a new chapter in Ibis' life begins.

Returning to their hotel, Ibis and Taia find a message warning of a threat to the U.S.A. by secret forces. In issue #21 General SERVISS sends Ibis on a secret mission to Europe. His airplane is shot down, but Ibis manages to parachute to safety using the Ibistick's magic. On the ground, he is able to escape the enemy (who are obviously Nazis), but is later caught by a man known as HALF MAN. Half Man lost both his left arm and right leg in war. The left side of his face is also gone, but is covered by a piece of cloth. Half Man had learned the art of Black Magic while he was recovering from his wounds. He planned to use his powers to help bloody tyrants overthrow Europe. Meanwhile, Taia has followed Ibis to Europe, and she, Ibis and Half Man are caught in a house that is bombed. Half Man manages to escape, with Ibis as his prisoner. Later, when Taia is pulled from the wreckage, she has the Ibistick but has lost her memory. After her memory is restored, Taia uses the Ibistick to locate Ibis. The Ibistick shows Half Man handing Ibis over to a Priest for a human Sacrifice to "The Angry God!" In a frantic state, Taia commands the Ibistick to help Ibis. However, the evil magic is so great that it neutralizes the Ibistick's powers. Refusing to give up, Taia concentrates the power of the Ibistick to just one small point...the ropes that bind Ibis! The ropes fall apart and Ibis kills the Priest. Meanwhile, thinking Ibis dead, Half Man's army starts to overrun a small nation. However, the little nation's small army stands ready to fight to the death, hoping their ancient legend would come true. It was written that a hero would come from heaven to save them in their country's hour of need. After Taia rejoined Ibis, Ibis had the Ibistick take them to the small army. The army upon seeing Ibis and Taia appear out of the air, believed their legend had come true. When Half Man's army attacks, the little army stands its ground and Half Man is forced to call on Black Magic. However, Ibis' white magic is more powerful and he defeats Half Man and restores him to a whole man. In thanks for his restoration, the Half Man uses the last of his magic to send Ibis and Taia home. So ended Ibis' first battle in Europe.

Now Ibis was to take his turn at horror, and in Whiz #25 he was to face RAMESES, the Living Mummy! Returning to the land of their birth, Egypt, they find that the Mummy of King Rameses, the mightiest ruler of old Egypt, once again lives and plans to conquer the country. Rameses was a ghastly sight! Nothing but skin and bones with rotting skin wrapped partly in mummy cloth. The battle that followed was magic against magic. Rameses and his army against Ibis and his friends. Bullets had no effect on Rameses' army because they were ghosts - creatures of the night. Rameses was winning until Ibis commanded the Ibistick to make it morning. With the raising of the sun, the army of Rameses vanishes. Seizing Ibis, Rameses tells him nothing can overpower him until he is in his tomb again. Ibis orders the Ibistick to bring the tomb to Rameses and the monster is again entombed, but only until #26, when Rameses returned. At the end of this story Ibis follows Rameses across the black depths of a great sea, into which Rameses had escaped. But will Ibis catch him? It was never told in Whiz Comics, because the continued stories ended with issue #26, Jan. 23, 1942 and in #27, Feb. 20, 1942 the story concerned the Flying Dutchman legend and the art is by a different artist. It was about this time that Fawcett underwent a change. They dropped most of their lesser heroes and began building up the remaining ones. There were art changes; new characters like Commando Yank, and Phantom Eagle were added and more art from the Jack Binder studios. Continued stories were out and complete stories in. All characters appearing in Whiz Comics - Capt. Marvel, Spy Smasher, Golden Arrow and Ibis would be appearing in their own book before 1942 was over. Only Lance O'Casey, Fawcett's adventurer of the high seas, was denied a comic book of his own, but he would have one later in 1946.

Moving ahead a few issues to Whiz #30, May 15, 1942 we find Ibis and Taia going to Sleepy Hollow to battle the Headless Horseman. This time the Ibistick creates many Ibis' to battle the Headless Horseman. Then in issue #33, the issue that teamed Capt. Marvel and Spy Smasher, we find Ibis battling Hitler and Attila the Hun in a story drawn by Al Carreno.

In issue #35 there is an oddity. Sir Derek Mace, an explorer, while in Africa kills a Witch Doctor. Before the Witch Doctor dies, he places a curse on Mace. A curse that changes Mace into a Wille-er-wolf every night the moon is full. Under the full moon he had but one desire - the desire to kill. In the end, the Ibistick kills the Leopard and he changes back into Mace. Mace's death had broken the spell. The oddity here is, that some years later, in Catman Comics #27, Nov. 1944 this same story was used as a basis for the Deacon story in that issue. The only differenoe being one Eric VonDoom turned into a Tiger with the first full moon.

Whiz #36 was a special Halloween issue - or "Special Spook Edition" with all the strips having ghosts in them. In Ibis' case, it was the Black Witch. The Black Witch wasn't defeated. The humans with their jitterbuging and Halloween pranks were just too much for her, so she rode her broomstick into the skies before Ibis could capture her.

I might add that around this time Ibis enjoyed some pretty good art - perhaps his best.

In Whiz #37 the Flying Dutchman returned and in #39 it was magic against magic in "The Slaves of the Lamp." In the best "Spectre" tradition, Ibis and the Genie from the Lamp battle as giants, with the planets in the background. Issue #40 had Ibis in "The Adventure of the Living Paintings." In #42 it was Ibis and the Black Sorcerer. The art had slipped, but it still had a very spooky setting as Ibis battled ghosts in a cemetary. Issue #43 had "The Man Who Sold His Soul To The Devil" with Ibis defeating Satan. By #47, Oct. 1943, Alex Blum was doing the art on Ibis. Blum was one of the real workhorses of the S.M. Iger shop. It was the Moon Monsters in #47 and the "Horror in the Himalayas" in #48. In this story Ibis and Taia go to the Himalayas to help the Chinese soldiers battle the Ichabod Ganks of the Planet Mazuma. Mazuma is the most distant and powerful planet in the Universe. Because their world had thin air, they landed in the high Himalayas because they couldn't breathe at lower altitudes. They were using the Chinese to experiment on, so they could see how they lived in heavier air. With the Ibistick, Ibis creates air at the mountain top and the aliens are defeated.

From about Whiz #30 thru #48, in my opinion, Ibis was at his peak. The stories all contained 10 pages each and in 1942 Ibis was awarded his own book. The origin was told in the first issue, as previously mentioned. In this issue Ibis also battles Ching Fang who takes over the Japanese army to invade all of the West. Roosevelt, Stalin and Hitler join forces to fight Fang. In the end, Ibis orders the Ibistick to cause the world to be as though Ching Fang had never been born. Fang vanishes and even Ibis forgets Fang ever existed. It was as if it had all been a dream. The 2nd story pits Ibis against a "Nightmare" and in the 4th story he and Taia journey to an ancient Mayan Empire in Central America to defeat Zoetil and his Rat People. The second issue of Ibis came out early in 1943, with Ibis meeting the Villains of Toyland, Sends Death on a Holiday, meets Rameses the Mummy once more and battles Mr. Discord. Alex Blum's art is featured on the first and last story. Both Ibis #2 contained 68 pages. Issue #3 didn't come out till 1945 and contained only 36 pages, with Ibis and the Jaguar Men, Music Madness and Karlan, the Last of the Sorcerers.

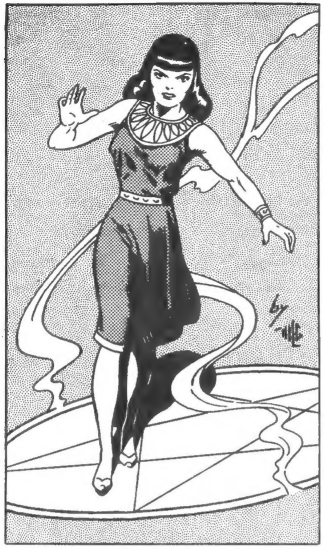
Ibis also appeared in Xmas, Gift and Holiday Comics (Fawcett's giant reprint books) as well as the 1948 Daisy Rifle Handbook and the Wheaties give-away book. This book was an Ibis miniature and had the same cover and lead story as Ibis #1 and the second story was from Whiz #30 and the 3rd from Whiz #31. Ibis was also featured in Fawcett's one shot 100 page comic, All Hero #1. This was a book I think should have made it beyond #1. A line up of Capt. Marvel Jr., Capt. Midnight, Lance O'Casey, Ibis, Golden Arrow and Spy Smasher was hard to beat. The stories were top notch and Ibis was no exception, with some of Alex Blum's best art and a 16 page story to boot. This Ibis story still remains as one of my all time favorites. Ibis Introducing BANSHEE O'BRIEN - Boy Enchanter in the Mystery of the "Modern Monster." Starting like a Hollywood movie, we find a bus load of people heading for the city when out of the night comes a many headed monster - A Hydra! The following morning the police learn that the bus was attacked by some sort of supernatural beast. The next night the 100 headed Hydra

Apollyon

strikes deep in a tunnel and The District Attorney calls on Ibis. That night Ibis and the people of the town trap the beast in the middle of a bridge and Ibis orders the Ibistick to destroy the Hydra. However, for the first time, nothing happens - the Ibistick is powerless! The Ibistick worked only against the old evils of the old world and was powerless against the Hydra, an evil created by the foulness and disease of modern great cities. Suddenly, a young boy appeared before the Hydra and pointing at the beast yelled a few magic words. A flash of light appeared and the monster fled into the river. The boy was Banshee O'Brien, who had tried to help a dying man and was given a book called "The Secrets of the New Magic." Ibis and Banshee became partners and followed the Hydra to an amusement park. Banshee's magic didn't always work and it failed this time, so Ibis had to utilize the Ibistick. The Ibistick clad them in armor and they started to cut off the monster's heads, only to find they grew faster than they could cut them off. Dawn was coming and the Hydra fled underground into the House of Horrors. Ibis and Banshee followed in close pursuit, only to have Ibis lose the Ibistick. Their only hope now was to run. Later, after finding the Ibistick, Ibis tells Taia and Banshee that he now knew how to destroy the Hydra. Since it was born in darkness, the one thing it feared was light. Next our heroes confront the menace at the ship yards. In true Hollywood fashion they try to kill it with electricity, using Banshee's current and the Ibistick to direct it at the Hydra. However, Banshee could not hold on and his magic slipped from him. Now bigger than ever, there seemed no way to top the Hydra. Suddenly Banshee cried out to Ibis to make the sun come out. In full light, the Hydra began to get smaller and smaller until finally it vanished. Banshee also appeared with Ibis in some of the Whiz stories as his partner.

By the mid 1940's all of Fawcett's characters, outside of the Marvels, became mostly filler features. Ibis was no different. Once enjoying 10 pages of story, Ibis was now reduced to only 6 pages. The art was no longer as good as it had been in the early '40's, but Ibis was not one to give up. Infact, Ibis appeared in every issue of Whiz from #1 thru #155 (the last issue) except for issue #107.

In Whiz #72, March 1946 Ibis came up against the Mystery of the EVIL IBISTICK. Humphrey Keene had just discovered he was Bankrupt and was angry at Ibis because he had wealth and power and he had nothing. So Keene sold his soul to Apollyon, in exchange for a



Taia

Black Ibistick to make him wealthy. However, he wanted more than money - he wanted Taia as well. Commanding the Black Ibistick to bring Taia to him, also brought Ibis and in the same instant Ibis commanded the good Ibistick to bring Taia to him. Taia couldn't respond both ways, so she died. Seeing what a fool he was, Keene ordered the Black Ibistick to restore Taia's life and take his instead. Ibis discovered that Keene had sold his soul to Apollyon, so he ordered the Ibistick to take him to hell. There, he fought with Apollyon and defeated him, thus saving Keene's life.

In issue #73, Ibis battles Pirates in "Delayed Treasure Hunt" and spends "A Day At The Races" in #74. In Whiz #76 Ibis meets the Flying Dutchman. Instead of a ship that sailed the 7 seas, this ghost ship was an airplane with a cursed pilot. The pilot had sold his soul to the devil (where have we heard that before?), but in the end Ibis managed to save him. In issue #81 the story featured "The Terror Typewriter" (a typewriter that made happen whatever was typed on it.) and a giant gorilla. By now the stories had expanded to 8 pages and the art was being done each issue by the same artist once again. Nothing outstanding happened in the following issues. Ibis met all types of characters, even some ghosts straight out of Casper in #87. Then in Whiz #89 this mediocrity came to an end. In that issue Ibis met "The Man With Nine Lives!" When Ibis answers his front door he finds a terrified man...a man terrified of cats! He had once belonged to a Society of Cat Worshipers and when he was chosen for one of their sacrifices he escaped. However, he had been found and suddenly cats appeared and started attacking him. Ibis ordered the Ibistick to present Cerberus, a 3 headed dog, to destroy the cats. One cat was killed and upon its death it changed back to a man. The High Priest of the Cat Worshipers swore Ibis would die. Ibis met the High Priest at the city dump and in a fight Ibis stabs the Priest in the heart. Ibis thought him dead, but when he turned to go the Priest jumped up and hurled the knife at him. Ibis ducks and this time sinks the knife deep into the body of the Priest. In issue #89, the Cat Priest returns! Unlike humans, he has 9 lives, but now 2 are gone. Soon Taia is in his hands and Ibis is lured into a trap. The trap is sprung and the Cat Priest gets the Ibistick. He orders it to blow Ibis to atoms. By now, we all know what will occur don't we...The Priest lost another life! Ibis retreives the Ibistick and orders it to take him to the temple of the Cat Worshipers. He is just in time to save Taia, who was about to be sacrificed. Ibis destroyes the temple and discovers the giant statue the Cat Worshipers worshiped was really alive. The Ibistick turns it to ice and it melts. So ended one of the best Ibis stories since the early forties.

There were no more outstanding stories until issue's #101 and 102, when Ibis met The Vampire Twins! Baron Ornzy and his sister Maryani had fled their native land and come to America to find fresh prey. However, they found Ibis instead. Ibis destroyed the Baron by exposing him to sunlight in issue #101 and Maryani got hers in #102.

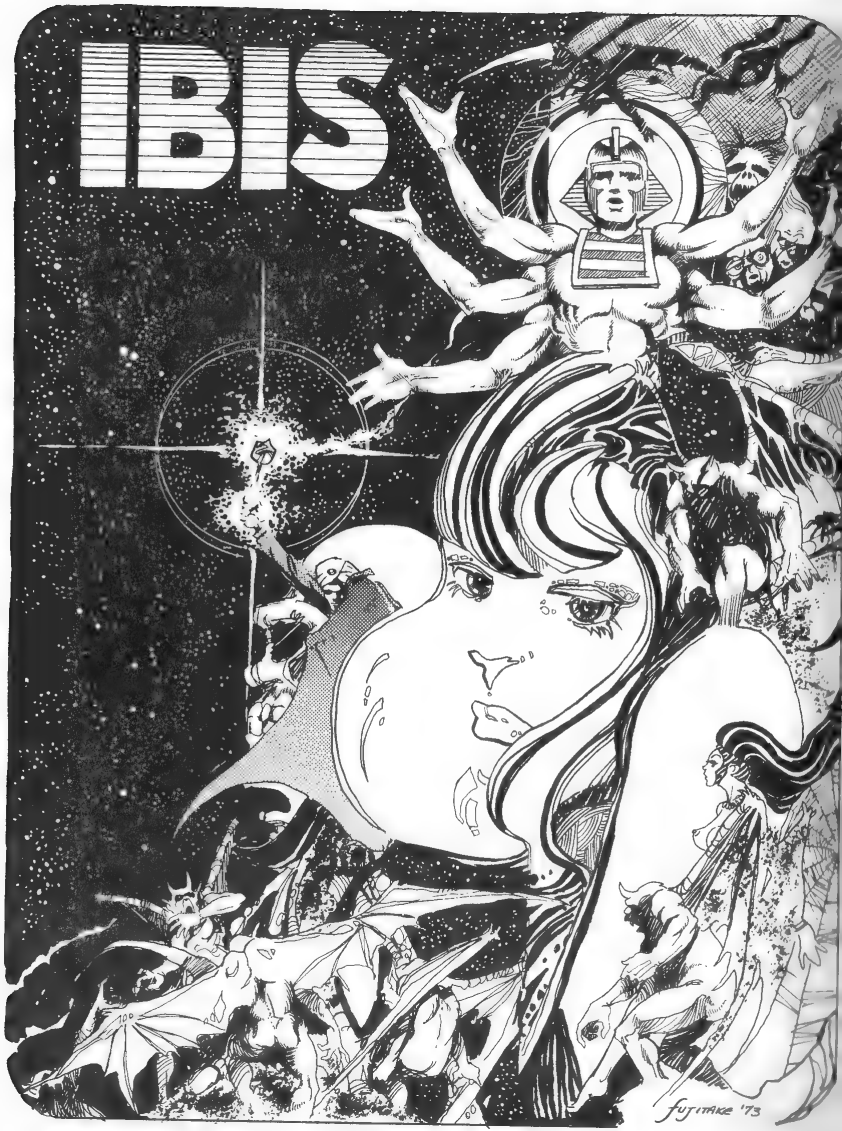
In Whiz #117 Ibis fought Apollyon, the Destroyer. He returned, with his Devil Imps in #123. In issue #126 Ibis battled the Headless Horseman. This was not the same story that appeared back in #30, but it was along the same lines. Issue #128 finds Taia and Ibis on the moon and deep within the earth in #132, fighting a huge brain.

The remaining stories aren't really worth mentioning and with Whiz #155, June 1953 Ibis' long career finally came to an end...almost. I say almost, because he did make one more appearance in Charlton Comics' "Danger and Adventure" in 1955. The story was drawn by Alex Blum and had Ibis pitted against a Viking Horde. For some reason, Ibis' turban was white in that adventure, where in all his Fawcett adventures it had been red.

Writers for the Ibis stories were Manly Wade Wellman in 1941 and Otto Binder from 1942 to 1946. Artists were many, with most of it coming from the Jack Binder shop. Mac Raboy worked on Ibis and Nat Champlin did some stories in 1942. Both Bill Ward (of Torchy fame) and Dick Rylands did pencils. Ray Harford and Jim Porter did inks around 1942. Al Carreno did some art in 1942 and Alex Blum had stories during '42, '43 and '44. Sam Cooper also got into the act in 1946, while Kurt Schaffenberger carried the load in later years after 1945. Both C.C. Beck and Pete Costanza did the early stories and Marc Swayze did at least one after the war. To sum it up, most art came from 4 different art shops - Harry Chesler's, Jack Binder's, S.M. Iger's and last C.C. Beck.

Ibis is gone now; but who knows, with DC re-presenting Capt. Marvel perhaps the man of the Ibis will excite us once again!

Cat Priest


IBIS
fujitake '73

MANDRAKE'S MAGIC MAKER

An Interview With...

FRED FREDERICKS

by

Martin L. Greim

Fred Fredericks has to be one of the warmest, friendliest, individuals I've met in many years! I first came into contact with Fred a short time after last years Boston Comic Convention. (Labor Day Weekend - '72.) Unable to attend, he'd phoned me to ask how the convention had gone and to inquire about a "Red Barry" Big Little Book. We got to talking about comics and old movie serials and it was only a short time later that we formulated plans for this article. After all, what better subject for a magic-oriented issue than an interview with the artist of MANDRAKE the MAGICIAN.

I was really looking forward to doing this article for two reasons. First, I wanted very much to meet, in person, the man whom I'd talked with on the phone and written many letters to...and secondly, to do the interview, it meant I'd have to travel down to Cape Cod once again. I spent all of my summers, up until 3 years ago, on Cape Cod. In fact, not very far from where Fred Fredericks now lives. The Cape holds a lot of memories for me...I sold my first piece of art in Provincetown and lived in an artists colony there for a time. So, for me, this trip and interview was filled with nostalgia.

It was Saturday, January 13th and my friend and neighbor Al Bradford and I were on our way to Eastham to spend the afternoon with Fred. Al, whose pictures grace this article, brought along his trusty camera and made a tolerant companion as I reminisced and pointed out some of the places I'd grown up in. He became even more tolerant, when I showed him some of the places I used to buy comics in! True fan, that Al Bradford!

Having spent only summers on Cape Cod, I was amazed to see the ocean frozen solid against the shore line breakwaters. It was bitter cold this day! About 2 p.m., I finally nosed my Buick up the Fredericks' pine tree bordered driveway. Fred came out from the back of the house and bid us welcome. We were ushered inside and once again we were warm. Warm on the outside and the inside, from Fred's hospitality. After we had removed our jackets, Fred introduced us to his family...his wife Frances, his daughter Connie, and his son Patrick.

There was one more member of the Fredericks' family we didn't meet. This was because he was added to the family a week or so after our visit. The new addition was "Hip" a german shepherd puppy. Fred swears he's not named after one Remington Kirby.

While Frances and Connie went about their business, Fred, Al and I went into the living room; followed, a few moments later, by Patrick. Al and I had brought along some art...some by ourselves and others by Steranko, Wood, Kirby and Williamson. We talked for quite some time about art and found Fred liking uncluttered art (art without a lot of "spinach", as Fred put it) best. I asked why Fred had moved from New Jersey to Eastham, Mass. He explained that for years he'd visited the Cape on summers and one day he decided to get away from the hustle and bustle and move there. As Fred put it..."I can mail my art in just as easy from here, as New Jersey."

Fred asked us if we'd like to see some movies from his movie collection. Naturally, we agreed! I've been a movie serial fan for years and I was overjoyed to see that Fred had many of my favorites. Films such as "Red Barry" starring Buster Crabe, "Dick Tracy", "The Clutching Hand", and "Daredevils of the Red Circle" with Charles "Ming the Merciless" Middleton as the villian 39013. Fred also had a very special treat in store for us. He had a copy of an unsold Mandrake the Magician television pilot film. You can be certain, not many comic fans have seen this film. The film starred Coe Norton as Mandrake, Woody Strode as Lothar, and Lisa Howard as Narda. The characterization and costumes were perfect. Lothar had a little hair on his head and sometimes wore a flowing leopard cape, but other than this, it was as though the characters from the Mandrake strip had stepped right out of the comic page. The story was filmed in Bermuda and dealt

THE FREDERICKS FAMILY

From left to right: Fred, his wife Frances, his son Patrick, with his ukulele and his his daughter Connie, who is probably thinking..."Who are these two wierd guys and why are they taking our picture?"

Fred sets up the movie screen, smiles and says, "Now we'll show some movies!" However, like any of us who've shown home movies, he runs into a bit of trouble... to say the least.

with Mandrake and Co., helping a government agent escape from a South American country. The show might have made it, except for the fact it was so horribly written. With all the chances for Mandrake to perform magic, he wound up saving the day by knocking the gun out of the villain's hand with a pen knife. It's a shame that this show, which had many possibilities, wasn't blessed with a better script. Perhaps if the show's producers had consulted with Lee Falk, Mandrake might be on television today.

Fred set up his silver movie screen and proceeded to transfer selected films from movie cores (spools that films are stored on) to movie reels. However, it was as if the astral form of The Cobra, Mandrake's arch foe, was present causing trouble. The movie reel slipped partially off the core and it took Fred quite some time to untangle it. Finally, with all the film safely on reels, we sat back and enjoyed seeing the fantastic serial action of yesteryear. Dick Tracy braving roaring infernos and blazing guns, Red Barry foiling Russian spies and oriental villains, and the Daredevils of the Red Circle fighting crooks and outrunning torrents of water rushing through an underground transit tunnel were only part of the afternoon's action.

After the movies were over, Fred presented me with something I'm very pleased to have in my collection. It was an original Sunday page representing some of his early work on Mandrake. The page was dated December 26, 1965. Portions of this Sunday page are represented in this article, along with some art Fred did especially for it.

At this point we stopped for supper. Connie had prepared a very tasty meal that both Al and I found very filling. After supper, tape recorder in hand, we went into Fred's studio and taped the following interview.

INTERVIEW:

Q. Will you give us some information about yourself... where you were born...art training and early strips, prior to Mandrake.

A. I was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the year of the CRASH, 1929. I was editor of the school paper and when I went into the Marines I was the staff cartoonist on the camp paper...The Camp Lejune Globe. After I got out, in 1953, I went to Cartoonists and Illustrators School. I went there 3 years, nights only, and studied with Hogarth, Dan Barry and Jerry Robinson. In 1957, I sold a local history strip to the Elizabeth Dailey Journal. It was called "New Jersey's Patriots" and it was about the Revolutionary War. The strip had a run of about 2 years and appeared in papers all throughout New Jersey. In 1960, I started a strip called "The Late, Late War" which was a Civil War gag-a-day thing. One day a gag about the South, the next day the North. It was played for laughs, but when the papers down South started to carry it they said..."There's nothing funny about the Civil War!" and that was that. After we lost papers on that, we did something in the same vein as "New Jersey's Patriots" for Adcocks Associates Syndicate. It was a 6 times a week strip about the Confederate side of the Civil War, and it was called "Under The Stars and Bars." The strip started at the beginning of the war and took it right up to the end. It ran for a year, or a little over. At that time I was also doing comic books for Gold Key. I started there by writing such books as Nancy and Sluggo, Terry-Toons, Mighty Mouse, and in 1961 I got a break...I wrote and drew my first book. It was called, "King Leonardo and his Short Subjects."

Q. How did you get interested in comic art?

A. Like everyone else, I guess. I looked at the comics every day. My favorites were Dick Tracy, Terry and the Pirates, Mandrake and The Phantom. I also liked Scoroby Smith and, believe it or not, Harold Teen. I used to think that if I could do cross hatches like Harold Gray in Little Orphan Annie, I'd have it made!

Q. Phil Davis was Mandrake's first artist; followed, after his death, by his wife. Did you take over the strip after her?

A. Yes! I took it over in April of 1965. Actually the drawings were supposed to begin in June, but I was asked to take over toward the end of a story and to do it in the same style as was then appearing in the strip. I did this for two weeks and then was able to switch it over to my own style.

Q. Speaking of style...Has Davis' art influenced you and has any other artist particularly influenced you?

A. Yes, Davis has influenced me. He was very good and came from the school that many of the King Feature artists did, in where they all drew like Alex Raymond. It was a popular style. Lyman Young had it and Charles Flanders and even in the old "Radio Patrol" strip.

MAESTRO, A DOZEN PROJECTS IN AS MANY NATIONS DEMAND YOUR DECISIONS! CAN YOU NOT POSTPONE THE MANDRAKE MATTER?
NO, UDD, MANDRAKE WILL NOT WAIT! HE IS ALERTED NOW, AWARE THAT I AM ALIVE!
HE'S THE ONLY MAN ON EARTH I FEAR—

Charlie Schmidt used it. It seemed to be the style of the time and it payed off for them.

Q. Do you have any favorite comic strip artists today?

A. Well, I read them all and like most of them. I can appreciate how hard it is to pack what you can into strips that are four columns wide and are not too tall either. It's like you have a little more room than a postage stamp for each panel, but you do with it what you can. Of the stuff that's around today, I still like what John Prentice is doing on Rip Kirby. It's good and clear and doesn't look muddy at all. That's one of the problems you have when stuff is reduced so small. I like what Sy Barry is doing on The Phantom. Again it's good and clear and easy to read. That's half the battle right there. If it's too loaded with "spinach" and mud, people will say, "Why bother!" and go on to something else that they can figure out. So I think a lot of the stuff that appears on the comic book page is fine, but it can't work in the comic strip, because there just isn't the space.

Q. Do you have much control over Mandrake's actions? Does Lee Falk give you explicit story lines to follow, or do you control the way you depict the characters?

A. If in a story Lee wants someone to look a certain way he'll tell me the way to depict him; otherwise I can do it my own way. Lee's scripts are very good and easy to follow. He knows what he wants, but unless it's something special, he leaves it up to me on how to make the characters look.

Q. How do you go about laying out your pannels?

A. First, I do my own lettering and decide where the word baloons are going to be. Then I try to vary my shots, almost like a movie. You have a long shot, then a close up, then a medium shot. You try to keep the camera moving, just like in a film.

Q. How many weeks in advance do you work from the actual publication of the art?

A. Five weeks for the daily strip and ten weeks for the Sunday page.

Q. What type of material do you work with?

A. I use an Esterbrook #22 pen point, with which I get a good thick and thin line. After I ink the figures with a pen, I put in the blacks with a #3 Windsor-Newton brush and always keep the white paint handy in case of mistakes!

Q. Do you get much fan mail, especially now that more fans see Mandrake in The Menomonee Falls Gazette?

A. Yes, a little bit more and I'm always happy to get it, as I know how tough it is to write a letter. They say that for every letter you get, that's for a hundred that wanted to write. That's what leads us onward. The knowledge that there's a hundred people out there that wanted to write, but can't!

Q. What is your work week like?

A. Well, I'm lucky if I can get two days off in a row. I do the lettering of the dailies and the Sundays all at once and while I pencil one page, I like to switch off and ink another. This keeps me in the mood. You can jump from one to the other, before you start to get tired. The hours are long, but it's still fun! I'd rather be doing this, than working down at Kinney Shoes.

Q. Have you ever used an assistant?

A. I never have! I've always done the whole thing from start to finish. An assistant would be to save time, but by the time you explain to him what you want and ohanging things, when they haven't done it exactly the way you wanted it, I figure your time is shot there anyway.

Q. Does it ever cause you any problems in your continuity, when shift from the dailies to the Sundays?

A. No, none at all! One thing I do that helps me out, is I take Polaroid shots of the dailies that inolude a new character or a new locale. In this way, I know what it looks like the following week when I start in again. You'd be surprised what you can get in a Polaroid shot. I can get sections from three dailies, by twisting them around to shoot the panels I want.

Q. Is there any particular phase of art that gives you problems?

A. Well, let's see...hands and feet don't give me any problems, but the animals do! If you can find a good picture to work from, then you're alright. Horses don't give me much trouble, because I always liked to draw westerns. I think almost any artist has problems with amimals. They're alright with people, but when it comes to animals you've got to be a specialist.

Q. Will you tell us about your hobbies? I know you are quite a movie buff.

A. It's amazing how many people in the cartooning game like the same things, or were influenced by the

same things when they were younger...like the movie serials and the old radio programs. You get together with a bunch of guys and you find out they liked the same shows and the same movies when they were younger. The serials helped me a lot. I'd see a good chapter and I'd want to go home and put something like that down on paper. About 10 years ago I found out there were a lot of silent pictures for sale, mainly shorts, not too many features, in 8m.m. They weren't too expensive, so I started with that, then went to 8m.m. sound. However, none of the old serials were being released in that area, so I had to go to 16m.m. Mainly, I like the serials that were based on comics. Serials like Red Barry, Dick Tracy, Radio Patrol and Ace Drummond. I found out something funny one time when I was visiting Al Williamson, another film buff. There was a great serial called "Daredevils Of The Red Circle," where the "heavy" was known by his old number in prison, which was 39013. Whenever, I draw a picture of a convict or a mug shot, the number under it is always 39013. I mentioned this to Al and he laughed and told me he did exactly the same thing. You see what I mean about people in this line of work being influenced by the same things?

Q. Do you read comic books at all, and if so, do you have any favorites?

A. Oh yes! I still look 'em over. And of course my daughter buys them too. I like to look them over and see what's going on at D.C. and Marvel. The only outfit I ever worked for was Gold Key. I worked for them for 5 years and never had a chance to go over to D.C. or Marvel with my portfolio, because I was lucky enough to be kept pretty busy there. When there was nothing doing in the adventure department, they'd give me something with funny animals or a gag book like "Bullwinkle" or "Mr. Ed." Then, when there would be something cooking with "Boris Karloff" or "Twilight Zone," I'd get a straight adventure story too. Today, I like the books that have the reprints from the "Golden Age" in them; because it's a chance to look at them without paying an arm and a leg.

Q. Many comic books and a few comic strips have dealt with socially significant subjects. Has Mandrake ever done this, and do you think this type of subject has a place in comics?

A. In Mandrake, I believe Lothar was the first black man to appear. Although in "All In Color For A Dime" I think they called him an Hawaiian or something. I really don't think socially significant subjects have a place in comic strips. In a daily strip, for about 1/2 seconds, people like to forget the cares of the day and read about adventure or get a laugh. I think people would rather see Mandrake battle the Cobra and leave the socially significant material to the editorial page.

Q. Is there any kind of "code" that governs the way you draw a comic strip and have you ever had to change any piece of art?

A. No, I've never had to change anything. Although it's supposed to be the old thing...good taste that governs the way you do a comic strip. A lot of guys these days seem to be yelling that comics should be more adult, like the movies, etc. But I think they forget that even though adults read the comics, it's still the thing kids ask for first. I feel that if things get too adult parents who used to say, "You can't go to that movie," may wind up saying, "You can't read those comics!" I know in England, some of them try to get as spicey as they can, but that's a whole different world. In the U.S. it never seemed

to go. It may change...I don't know. If it does, I think it will just be something else to help wreck the comic page.

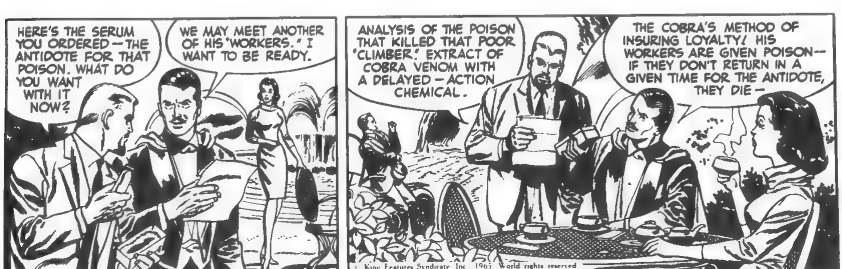
Q. Do you research anything for Mandrake? Like a locale, autos, costumes, etc.

A. Oh yes! You always have to look things up...make sure you're doing it right. Like with autos...you can't use any specific model, but if it's 1973, you have to have a 1973 looking car. It wouldn't be right to have a guy driving a Packard and claiming it's a 1973 auto. If a locale changes, I try to research the costumes or at least try to make them look right. If it looks right, then you're half way home.

Q. Back around 1966, Alain Resnais was going to make a Mandrake movie, but became disinterested. Have you any idea why this happened?

A. I heard a little about it. I believe he was sidetracked by something he was doing with Stan Lee. I do know Resnais gives Mandrake and The Phantom a lot of credit; saying he got a lot of the camera angles and the way a story is told from these strips.

Q. Can you offer any advice to aspiring writers and artists who wish to break into the comic strip field?


HERE'S THE SERUM YOU ORDERED — THE ANTIDOTE FOR THAT POISON. WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH IT NOW?
WE MAY MEET ANOTHER OF HIS 'WORKERS.' I WANT TO BE READY.
ANALYSIS OF THE POISON THAT KILLED THAT POOR 'CLIMBER.' EXTRACT OF COBRA VENOM WITH A DELAYED — ACTION CHEMICAL.
THE COBRA'S METHOD OF INSURING LOYALTY. HIS WORKERS ARE GIVEN POISON — IF THEY DON'T RETURN IN A GIVEN TIME FOR THE ANTIDOTE, THEY DIE —
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LEFT

Fred Fredericks puts the finishing touches on a Mandrake daily page.

RIGHT

Comic Crusader editor Martin L. Greim and Fred Fredericks in his studio.

A. In adventure strips, it's mighty tough. The syndicates seem to be buying the funny strips more readily than the adventure ones. However, in Europe, Sweeden in particular, it seems to be just the opposite. They went in for the funny, gag-a-day strips, but now adventure is very big with them. The adventure strip today seems to be better accepted in the comic book than in the comic strip. If you had a good gag strip, I think you'd stand a much better chance of selling it to a newspaper syndicate than if you had an adventure strip.

Q. Let's talk a little bit about Mandrake. About how far back does the 8 organization go and the villain called The Cobra?

A. The Cobra, I believe, was the first big villain Mandrake faced. He was actually a man called Lucifer, who was Mandrake's teacher at "The School of Magic." He wears a silver mask because he was badly burned in a fire that he blames Mandrake for. The sign of 8 organization only goes back to 1965. In fact, I did the first story on them. They show up every now and then and get nastier each time.

Q. Is there any particular character in the Mandrake series you enjoy working on more than the others, or any particular story line you enjoy working on?

A. No. There all fun to draw. There was one adventure, a while back, I especially enjoyed. It was one in where two of Mandrake's villains teamed up...The Cobra and The Mole.

Q. What does the future hold for Mandrake and Fred Fredericks?

A. Well, let's see...Mandrake has had a run now of 40 years...beginning in 1934; so as long as the hand is quicker than the eye and Mandrake can keep up with the tricks, I'll be there. Mandrake is very popular in Italy, France and South America. He's in many papers in the U.S., but his popularity overseas is really strong. Like The Phantom, I think he'll keep rolling right along.

With the interview ended, Al and I prepared to leave on our long trip home. We had both spent a wonderful afternoon that we would long remember.

In closing, Fred imparted a story to us about how he had gone to a local school to give a chalk talk. He had felt pretty good about going there, until he realized that the kids had expected to see a magician doing tricks. Ah yes, the price you pay for not being syndicated in the Boston area.

Fred Fredericks is a man who enjoys his work. He works hard at it, doing both the daily and Sunday Mandrake strips. Still, with all this work, he maintains his sense of humor and love for the graphic media. I'm pleased to have met Fred Fredericks and that I can call him friend!

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For this edition of COMIC CHATTER, Bob Cosgrove talks about pencilling in comic art. It is a brief introduction for the uninitiated and for the pencil pages that follow.

The Art Of Pencilling
by
BOB COSGROVE

The production of a comic book can be broken down into a number of basic stages:
The writer, who conceives the story.
The breakdown artist, who takes the story and translates it into a series of picture layouts.
The penciller, who takes the breakdowns and transforms them into finished line drawings.
The inker, who goes over the pencils with ink, so that they can be reproduced.
The letterer, who does the text and word baloon lettering.

Aesthetically speaking, it is usually best if the writer, breakdown artist, penciller and inker are the same man, but often this is not the case. The most important job is that of the breakdown artist, for it is he who sees that the story is told simply, directly, and visually. Very often the penciller and the breakdown artist are the same man.

Pencil drawings can be done in two basic ways - line and tone. A line drawing uses the point of the pencil to outline the content of the picture. Later, the artist may indicate areas of shadow. This is a somewhat artificial way to proceed, because when the human eye looks at an object, it does not see a black line outlining it, such as the artist draws.

The alternate approach - which most artists use - is tone. Using the side of the pencil, the artist creates subtle variations in shadows, playing dark areas against light to create the illusion of three-dimensional form.

However, the tonal approach is very rarely used by comic artists, simply because they are doing illustrations which will later be inked. Without using crosshatching, or ink wash, subtle tone effects are difficult to achieve in ink. Thus, pencils are for the most part line drawings, because pencils themselves can not be reproduced very successfully. However, attempts have been made by National, and with somewhat more success, by Warren Pub. One way to prepare pencils suitable for offset reproduction is to draw with a very black pencil on a highly textured paper called Ross Board. Pat Boyette did this for Charlton's "Children of Doom" story.

Drawing for mass reproduction, and unable to always count on the co-operation of the inker and the colorist, the pencil artist must use fairly traditional compositional techniques to make sure the panels hold together. These methods involve composing the picture according to pre-determined intellectual rules. These include locating the main action at a pre-determined "center of interest," composing the picture in the shape of a triangle, placing the main figure at the picture's "vanishing point," or using perspective in some other fashion.

Very few artists use another fairly old technique, designing the picture in terms of directional thrusts. Almost no artists use optical composition or compositional color.

Some artists, like Steve Ditko, will fill up the pencilled page with nothing but outline - leaving the solid blacks to the discretion of the inker. Others, like John Buscema and Jim Steranko, do a complete, finished drawing with all the areas of solid black indicated. Some artists, like Gil Kane or Steranko, do layouts first, then proceed to pencil, working from their preliminaries. Others, like Jack Kirby, simply start in pencilling, perhaps making a preliminary line or two, then plunging right in.

The Kirby pages which follow, illustrate Kirby's style. Almost no preliminary lines can be found upon scrutinizing the original - the pencils are pure line drawings, beautifully complete. The very speed and ease with which Kirby works is apparent in his forceful, stylized lines. The subtleties of tone work are entirely absent.

The drawing of Merlin was probably a left-over comic book page, while the dynamic Demon double page was most likely a presentation piece to D.C. Demon fans will note that Kirby has eliminated the scallops on the cape, deleted the chest insignia and tunic effect and changed the spikes on The Demon's wrist bands to mere white circles - all to the detriment of the character's conceptual appearance.

The Steranko drawing of Wonder Woman is an extremely interesting one. At first glance, it may appear to be a tonal study, but it actually is composed of many fine lines, one on top of the other, put on in layers which give the appearance of tonal drawing, but only the appearance. Since his appearance in comics, Steranko has moved from a fairly stylized approach to pencilling, to a more realistic, "fine arts" style. However, even his most carefully crafted pencil studies fail to betray any use of tone - which creeps routinely into the most mundane line drawings of, say, Neal Adams.

Martat
Bill Wrightson
Jack Kirby

To Marty

TO MARTY AND ELLIE — HAVE A SWINGING HOLIDAY —
BERNIE

SAVE US MAGICIAN, CRIED WE AND CAME THE ANSWER ..."I FAILED TO SAVE THE ONE THING I LOVED MOST!"

by

TOM FAGAN

By rights it should have been the end, but it was the beginning!

A tiny plane blown off course flutters helplessly into the maw of a "mysterious canyon somewhere in the Himalayas." From a lofty crag far overhead, almond eyes study the descent and final crash. "Look, An Omen!" softly breathes an excited companion and together the two rush to inform five other Orientals gathered about a warming fire inside a pagoda that: "Brothers! Hear! It Is Time Our Prophet Has Come!"

It is June 2nd, 1940. Mr. Mystic is about to be born. Seventy centuries have awaited his coming. The world trembles, without quite knowing why. Seven monks alone know the reason why.

The setting is colorful, wild and outrageous. As fantastic as only that true spawn of American culture... the comic strip...can make it. Yet it is a bastard scion that shall birth the latest savior of mankind.

Neither newspaper nor comic book; still the strip is both the same but not quite either. Call it a supplement if you will---the first being 16 pages in length...a miniature comic book that for years to come will be tucked tenderly tween the folds of mammoth mother Sunday pages of your favorite seventh-day reading summary of humanity's harrangues and hurrahs of the week just past.

Out tumbles Supplement One and before your eyes is The Spirit..."America's only middle class crime fighter" and "truly adult character," he'll be called later. But this is 1940 remember and you simply read to enjoy, not discourse learnedly. Ah, then luscious, leggy Lady Luck-lovable lust object; but like she's a lady, man, so dispense with the longing...could there be more. Ia! the best is yet to come...at least in those early issues he was the grandest.

In art and story line (Will Eisner nonwithstanding) none could best the lord of legerdemain, the sovereign

of sorcery...The master magician Mr. Mystic materializes...

This is his story---or rather part of it---for one need not know everything about a man to understand him...no, one only has to recognize a portion of the psyche to perceive future fullfillment or succeeding sorrow.

Here then is the tale of Mr. Mystic. Of what happened to him between that first Sunday in June of 1940 until another Sunday, this one dated March 2nd, 1941.

It isn't particularly long recounting. Less than a year is involved and then only certain happenings will be told. It isn't particularly important either... unless you consider the life of a single individual to be of import.

If you read on not only will you make the acquaintance of Mr. Mystic, you'll meet Madam Elena, The Shadowman, Penny Douglas and others who touched upon one another's lives to a lesser or greater degree.

You agree? Splendid! Now judge them for yourself. It begins here. You are back in 1940. The United States isn't yet involved...but: "Like An Angry Flood, The Second World War Surges Across Europe, Engulfing All That Lies Before It...Small Countries, Peaceful For Centuries, Are Swept Into The Maelstrom And Destroyed"...

Evacuation in the path of the oncoming unidentified invader. Planes taxing frantioally. An American (Ken) realizes a premier official is being left behind. "Quick, Professor! Take My Place In The Plane! You're A Genius...The World Needs You...I'm Just An Attache!"

However, Prof. Padewsik demurrs only to have his objections overruled by an American right to the ohin and unconscious is carried aboard the waiting skycraft.

Left behind, Ken discovers that the Premier has dropped his "memoirs." "These Scraps Of Paper May Eventually Bring Peace. I've Got To Get Them Back To Him!" He also realizes, as the story relates, that he will be in "a real pickle!" if he is captured with the papers on his person.

Ken dashes to an abandoned hanger and "luckily he finds a plane left there." Admist shot and shell and general hell, the plane noses into the air and as Dorothy's cyclone pitched her into Oz, Ken is flung into the less heavenly retreat of a Himalaya canyon... all the more remarkable because his plane was a standard model and certainly not a long-distance tripper!

Is it chance, or was it foreordained this strange course of events? No matter, a hero is about to be born. For as a high priest reads from an ancient scroll: "As It Is Written In The Book Of Ages: On The Seventh Hour After Sunset, On The Day In The Seventh Month In The Seventieth Century After Our Deity's Death, Our Prophet Shall Come To Us From The Sky! Aye! Verily, It Is He!"

A sharp command: "Quick Bring Him Here! We Shall Brand Him With Our Sign And Make Him All Powerful! Fetch Him!" An order carried out with swiftness! Avows the priest: "After We Burn The Symbol On His Forehead, The Mysteries Of Life Shall Be Known To Him!"

Heated iron bites deep into skin: a cabalistic marking cauterized for a lifetime. The pronouncement..."With This Brand, I Name Thee Ruler Of Magic, Disciple Of The Seven Lamas And Knight Of Righteousness!"

Pain-shocked awareness...an awake and angry American. At his wish, restraining bonds melt away. Lamas and Pagoda disappearing from view. Another miracle...at a thought, the wrecked plane is fully restored. And: "Suddenly Ken Finds Himself Clothed And A Great Voice Booms From The Sky...' You Will Be Known As Mr. Mystic, Endowed With Unlimited Powers To Combat The Forces Of Evil Plaguing The Earth. Go And Do Your Work!'"

Strange and colorful is his rainment. A turban of safforn swathes the head. An ankle length, wide flared collared cape is bound at the throat with a golden chain. About the neck, a mystic amulet of ocher. A shirt of immaculate whiteness, with contrasting dress bowtie of black. A mess jacket of brilliant blue. A scarlet cumberbund to compliment the cape. Knife creased trousers matching the jacket's hue. But most conspicious of all, the forehead brand startling in its raised and reddened flesh.

This is Mr. Mystic, whose adventures will continue weekly in Sunday newspaper supplement form until May 14, 1944. The beginning stories have the name, "W. Morgan Thomas," signed to them. Don't be fooled, the author and artist is really that late great of comic

art, S. H. (Bob) Powell!

Powell will do the Mystic strip for some two years (Oct. 3, 1943, was the last issue with his name on it.) before being called into the armed services. Stories thereafter will be by Fred Guardineer. However, it is Powell, who'll bring the strip into prominence. You'll find his name signed on the last panel of the second story (June 9, 1940) but later it will be moved up to its rightful place beneath the main logo. And there will come a time when the Powell signature will end with the flourish of Mr. Mystic's brand as part of the overall penmanship! The Creator and the Comic are one!

Perhaps, that last statement is a bit flamboyant, but Mr. Mystic did continue on to be one of the most popular magician strips of its time and it was competing against such series as Yarko The Great (an earlier Eisner creation) Zatara, Zambini, El Carim, Nagaf The Terrible, The Wizard, Tor-The Magic Master, and others. (Truly the magician ruled throughout the land in those halycon days!)

There is Natural Magic; there is Black Magic; there is the Magic of Love...before we speak of all three shall we investigate if the trust of the Seven Lamas and the confidence of the "Great Voice" were well placed?

It was and more! Still writing "My Plea of Peace To The World" was Professor Padewski, now secluded in an Alpine village. Bent on his assassination are two assassins who had failed in the attempt once before. Mr. Mystic confronts the trembling duo, as their chieftain is apparently airborne and speeding away to comparative safety. Suddenly, a mountain-high Mr. Mystic appears and with a gesture, turns the plane into a bird. "YEEOW!" screams the leader, plunging thousands of feet earthward.

Who is right...the peacenick of the 70's or the patriot of the 40's? Your choice, man. Mr. Mystic's philosophy..."I Should Kill You Like Your Leader, But You Have An Excuse For Ignorance." (Even Mr. A would have cause to smile at such a naive statement as that!)

In the beginning Mr. Mystic's powers were infallible... well, mostly so...the grand lama may have overlooked a thing or two. However, Mr. Mystic could do such things as turn an ordinary squirrel into a steed for riding; or transform himself into a mountain goat to skip across crags at will; become invisible; walk through walls and allow others to do so; grow gargantuan or shrink to sliver height, fly through the air or teleport himself by thought wherever he pleased... sometimes merely by wishing it so, other times by intense concentration, or by relying on the amulet, even resorting to plain old-fashion parlor magic... and, if all else failed, a hard right to an opponent's jaw proved as effective as any magic known to man or demon.

However, it was a woman who taught Mr. Mystic the most powerful enchantment of all---the magic of love. Her name was Elena...a raven-haired beauty.

They would meet as sworn enemies, only to fall in love and know a romance that would rage across continents, literally touch the moon and even transgress the boundaries of death itself.

The story line was Powell at his best and he began it in the second Mr. Mystic adventure dated June 9, 1940. A million dollar reward has been offered for the capture of Karoly Gore, a dictator and "Europe's Most Powerful Man." Mr. Mystic wants the reward, not for monetary gain, but because, "That Money Could Do Lots Of Good In This Topsy-Turvy World!"

Yet Gore is not the real foe as Mr. Mystic soon discovers. It is Elena he must deal with, for the dictator is but her pawn. The three confront one another as Mr. Mystic declares solemnly, "I Have Pledged My Life To Overcome The Evil In This World, Such As You!"

The declaration is out short. Elena has released a chain holding a chandelier and the heavy lamp crashes down on a turbaned head. Flight! That too out short. Having recovered, Mr. Mystic transformed himself into a nimble-footed mountain goat. He scales high desolate peaks and assuming his old self, he wearily approaches the hideaway where the pair have taken refuge.

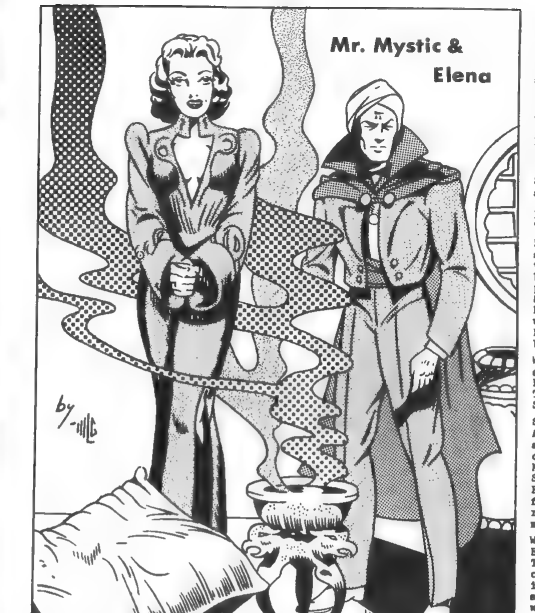
Elena's welcome? A machine gun spattering lethal lead, but, with a mere gesture of his hand, Mr. Mystic causes the weapon to melt like butter. Elena's next words are the understatement of all time..."His Magic Is Very Powerful! We've Got To Run...It's Our Only Chance!"

Run they do, but tiring of the chase, Mr. Mystic again raises his arm and the frightened dictator becomes a tree. At the edge of a cliff...Elena. Her stance is noble and defiant as she says, "I, Too, Know The Secrets Of Magic! You Can't Hurt Me With Your Spells. I'm Not Afraid Of You, Mr. Mystic!"

A brave statement that chills suddenly at the sight of a gun materializing in the magician's hand. Elena chooses death over apprehension and hurls herself over the precipice. The bottom of the abyss awaits far below!

Yet Hold! Mysterious words are whispered as Mr. Mystic rips the cloak from his shoulders. Miraculously, it flashes downward enfolding the falling Elena and carries her upwards to the waiting magician. A drawn knife changes to ropes binding the furious woman's wrists. A squirrel becomes a firey steed, carrying Mr. Mystic and Elena, while the defeated dictator Gore puffs wearily behind them...the destination prison.

"It's A Pity Your Disposition Doesn't Match Your Charming Face!" says Mr. Mystic to the now subdued female fury. The million dollar reward is collected. It will be used to feed and clothe people left destitute through the doings of the dictator and his deadly damsel.



Woman and magician will meet again soon, this time Elena practicing the magic of the temptress. "I've Loved You Ever Since I First Saw You! We Could Rule The World Together!" But Mr. Mystic is of stronger moral fiber. "With You, Never!" is his answer, as once again he defeats Elena and her new cohort in evil, the insidious Dr. Gung, creator of human robots, mindless beings subject to his command.

Elena may be evil personified and a direct contrast to the handsome magician who epitomizes goodness incarnate. Yet never was the saying, "Opposites attract," more true. Consider the story that appeared on July 21, 1940. Elena has been shot while trying to escape; an excited general has fired blindly. "Elena! Elena!" cries Mr. Mystic as he holds the fallen woman in his arms. "I'm Afraid This Is It, Mr. Mystic! M-My Only Regret Is That We Weren't On The Same Side...We Would Have Made Such A Good Pair...Such A..." Her voice trails off.

Now it is the magic of medicine that can alone save Elena. A two-hour wait seems an eternity to the anxious Mr. Mystic before he is told the doctor's verdict is that the woman will live. And Mr. Mystic reveals feelings perhaps hidden hereto previously even to himself as he says, "Thank Heaven! She Is An Opponent, But A Brave One And I Admire Her!"

Is Elena really evil? Will she remain a daughter of treachery? The July 28, 1940, tale answers both questions. This time Elena makes use of magical powers she has constantly claimed yet never resorted to against Mr. Mystic. It is the showdown!

A formidable foe is this fabulous female. The curvaceous conjurer transforms a feather into a deadly condor. Elena's command: "Kill Your Prey!" Mr. Mystic counters by changing a gentle tabby cat into a bundle of feline fury, levitated into the air to kill with a vicious swipe of unsheathed claws.

As the bird's carcass drops to the floor, Elena changes it into a giant monster which upon destroying the cat turns then on Mr. Mystic. The magician, likewise, assumes mammoth height. In a tree-slinging melee the monster is killed and Mr. Mystic resumes his normal size.

It is the hour of truth. A downcast Elena confesses, "My Power Was Given Me By 'Cardin The Terrible,' With The Warning That If I Ever Was Beaten In A Match I'd Lose Any Magic I've Ever Known, And I Have."

"Cardin! That Fiend! No Wonder You Have Worked On The Side Of Evil So Long. Perhaps, We Can Save You Yet!" In a firm voice and with a magical passing of the hands, Mr. Mystic orders, "Then I Command You, Elena, To Return To Your Former Self, But This Time To Put Your Talents To Work On The Side Of Righteousness!"

Mr. Mystic for a second time holds Elena in his arms. There is no fear of death this time, only the promise of life...of two people wanting to be one. Mr. Mystic knows a new magic; it compels him to bend forward saying softly "Ever Since I First Saw You, I Wanted To Do Something! Now The Time Has Come!" Only the full moon is witness to the enchantment of their kiss. And Elena responds...Magician and maiden, bewitched by the spell eternal!

What of Cardin? Dialogue and captions tells all in the August 4th, 1940, chapter. "You Are Evil, Cardin, And You Tried To Kill Elena! For That You Die! Shouts Mr. Mystic And Cardin Screams As He Turns To Sand..."

Swears Mr. Mystic, "Dust To Dust, Cardin! You Are Well Repaid!" Mute sand! A man carrying an unconscious woman flee. The repugnant sight of a castle vanishes, as a gesture from Mr. Mystic brings about a searing, raging holocaust. Sighs Elena, "Now Nothing Can Ever Take Me Away From You Again!" (Who could do less for one's fiancee; for truly she was on the path of righteousness and on the marriage trail of the master magician.)

What would take America to the 1960's to do, Elena and Mr. Mystic were to do 20 years earlier. Their courtship had rushed across the continents of Europe, North America, Africa and Asia, but it reached a high point (Sept. 1st, 1940) with a zoom to the moon. No national debt liability was entailed; just a minor threat to Elena's assets.

For the "King of the Moon" desired Elena and he was willing to trade "a rocket force powerful enough to destroy ten worlds" for her, to a Hindu bent on conquering the earth and crushing Mr. Mystic. He did neither. A grave in the gray void of space was his reward; an empty bridal chamber was the lot of the moon king, as fiancee and fakir whirled through the fourth dimension back to their own time and place on earth.

Keeping unwanted suitors from his beloved, became a fairly regular task for Mr. Mystic. Her latest admirer, as of Dec. 15th, 1940, was a Spanish prince, Don Juan De Leon. While any other woman might have been flattered by the attentions of royalty, Elena was less than impressed. Her Don Juan had been dead since A.D. July 10th, 1485! The phantom profligate was laid to rest with a firey finality...by a maddened Mr. Mystic, not an entranging Elena.

Some people court death finding it desirable and having a magical attraction all of its own. One of these was Elena and as much as she loved her fiancee...

The setting was in Portugal. A grand masquerade ball was in progress, that evening of Dec. 22nd, 1940. While Mr. Mystic performed parlor magic to amuse a society audience...Elena danced a waltz with a stranger whose face was hidden in shadow. They agree to a tryst in the garden.

Elena had only met the man that very afternoon...a chance encounter, while out costume shopping with her friend, Penny Douglas. An inkling that Penny cared for her friend's fiance is revealed in her reaction to Elena's engaging in conversation with the stranger. Penny scolds, "Engaged To A Man Like Mr. Mystic And She Can Flirt With Someone Else! What A Girl!"

The stranger has charmed Elena. However, Mr. Mystic knows him for what he is. He has met him on at least two previous occasions (stories dated Sept. 22nd and Oct. 20th, 1940). It is The Shadowman. He has another name, which the magician now reveals: "Elena, If You Wish To Break Up Our Engagement I'll Not Stop

You, But Don't Fool Around With This Man! Anyone Else, Elena, But Not Him! He's Death, Elena! Death! Do You Hear? If You Meet Him In The Garden It's The End Of Everything!..."

Elena refuses to listen. Mr. Mystic follows after her, but before he can catch up with her he is downed by a knife-wielding assassin. Penny Douglas saves him and at the same time makes known her true feelings: "The B-B-Big Lug! If He Had Hurt You, I'd-I'd Scratch His Eyes Out! W-Well? What Are You Waiting For? Your Precious Elena Is Keeping Her Rendevous...Get Going Before It's Too Late!" A new look crosses Mr. Mystic's face as he says, "Er...Yes...Of Course, Come On!"

They are too late. Even now The Shadowman holds Elena in his arms. "Do You Know Who I Am? Do You Know What This Means? You Can't Ever Turn Back!" Leaning forward to embrace him, Elena answers, "I Know, Yes! Take Me! I Love You! I've Loved You All My Life!" In shadow a kiss is exchanged...a magical moment suspended in moonlight, a lifetime of waiting consumed in a moment of eternity.

Arm in arm they walk away into deeper darkness, beneath a full moon. Turning for a wave of departure, The Shadowman calls out, "It's Too Late My Friend! She Belongs To Me Now! Don't Worry! I Promise You That She Shall Live In Eternal Happiness!"

As Mr. Mystic's origin tale was reminiscent of "Lost Horizons," this story is remindful of "Death Takes A Holiday." A stunned Penny Douglas can only murmur, "Oh, Elena! Elena!" His grief almost too much to bear, Mr. Mystic stands, with head bowed, "We'll Never See Her Again, Penny, Not In This World Anyway...Goodby, Elena. Goodby! "SHE'S GONE! NOTHING CAN BRING HER BACK! I FAILED TO SAVE THE ONE THING I LOVED MOST!"

Grief has a way of healing, and soon, with Penny Douglas "as a constant companion," Mr. Mystic continues his "tireless fight against evil." Elena's name is mentioned in a March 2nd, 1941, conversation. "You Still Love Her Very Much, Don't You?" "No," replies Mr. Mystic..."I THOUGHT I Loved Her, But I Found Out I Was Wrong When I Met YOU, Penny...You've Shown Me The Real Thing!" He bends to kiss her, unaware a gun is pointed at his back.

What is romance, becomes horror. Lead tears along on a savage errand...a body slumps to the floor. "You KILLED him! You Killed MR. MYSTIC!" Words Penny repeats over and over as she grabs up a gun. "I Swore I'd Get Him For Sending Me To The Pen!" snarls Max Lucker in explanation..."Stop Looking At Me Like THAT!...I'll..." The sentence is never finished; the speaker is silenced forever!

A life slipping away. What magic is there to save it? What magic can possibly halt The Shadowman already escorting Mr. Mystic beyond the veil? Is the love of one woman and the respect of another more powerful than death itself? Are prayer and persuasion strong enough to restore the miracle of life?

Penny prays...there is nothing else she can do. And even so, Mr. Mystic's heartbeat falters. Adrenalin is

administered. A physician's observation..."If He Doesn't React To This...It's The END!!" The heart is apparently still.

Yet a heart is a mystical thing...not bound by the limitations of blood and flesh. It can reach out to retrieve, to caress, to comfort, to heal. If one heart has the power for this, then how much wonder may be worked by three?

Mr. Mystic following The Shadowman saying he has forgotten to say goodbye to Penny. The cold answer, "That's All Right...In A Case Like This, People Aren't Expected To Say Goodbye!"

And at the entrance of the "Land of the Dead," Elena stands waiting. The first question Mr. Mystic asks is..."Are You Happy?" "Oh, Yes!!" she reassures him before turning to The Shadowman: "No! Wait!! Don't Take Him Across The River! You CAN'T CUT His Career So Short!! He's..." And surprisingly enough Death relents.

In life and love, Mr. Mystic and Penny are reunited. Watching from a spectral distance, Elena - her arm around The Shadowman; his hand in her's - says softly: "I'm So Glad You Let Him Go Back! There's A REAL Happy Ending...Thanks To You!" And the Shadowman answers, "Me Or YOU, Dear?"

By rights it should have been the end, but it was the beginning! Was there happiness ever after? That's another story to be recounted another time...another place.

Suffice to say, the magic lived on. Still lives on, in fact, in the minds of those who, on so many Sundays, were fortunate enough to have as their weekly visitor none other than...MR. MYSTIC!

THAT OL'

BLACK MAGIC

By

BOB COSGROVE

Recently, National Periodical Pub. Inc., announced that they were reviving a Simon & Kirby title published by Headline Publications in the early fifties. The title's name? BLACK MAGIC!

Although Jack Kirby is best known for his contributions to the cape-and-cowl world of the super hero, many of his most memorable achievements came in other genres: the Western, with Bullseye and the superlative Boy's Ranch, crime comics and even romance. Black Magic was the Kirby entry into the world of horror reigning supreme at EC, and eagerly entered by a host of EC imitators.

From the start, Simon & Kirby shunned the gory, blood and guts horror that EC's superlative artists made presentable and it's shoddy competition made simply disgusting. Emphasis in the Black Magic books focused on the sense of mystery that accompanied magic and the supernatural. The story stood on its own merits--not on the amount of red ink splattered from panel to panel. This policy was a mixed blessing. When Simon & Kirby were at their height, nothing could beat them. When they began to lose interest in the book, doing simply covers and a short plotless story, the powerful Simon & Kirby style still carried the book. When the pair left, however, their successors continued the policy of letting the stories stand on their own merits. Usually such merits were non-existent, and readers found themselves wishing for a bit of blood and thunder.

This then, is a brief survey of the title called Black Magic; one that will hit the high points and plumb the depths of the book, with special attention to stories that were of peculiar interest.

One such story appeared in the very second issue of Black Magic. Simon & Kirby introduce "Mr. & Mrs. Robert Clark," specialists in interpreting dreams. At the moment, they are busy helping a man named Edward Morrow, the victim of a terrible, recurring dream. In his nightmare, Morrow finds himself racing down an icy winter road, clad only in his pajamas, an old celluloid collar and tie. Reaching a colonial town, he seeks shelter, but an old Puritan named Joshua, his hostile features painted a macabre crimson, slams the door in Morrow's face.

In a second dream, Morrow finds himself the defendent in a trial conducted by monsters. As he pleads with his captors, they cry "bring in the girl!" Before the startled salesman, the monsters hurl a wretched, beaten girl who screams, "I confess! HE'S the man! Don't whip me anymore." The girl's accusation brings a concerted howl of triumph from the grotesque assemblage and Morrow finds himself borne aloft by a hoast of arms and hurried off in the ensuing chaos! He is bound to a post and stripped to the waist in the snow! A man detaches himself from the ghoulish crowd and moves menacingly toward Morrow with a whip in hand. "Sixteen lashes! Always sixteen lashes! I counted them between my clenched teeth in every one of the dreams that followed!"

How to explain the dream? That was Simon & Kirby's problem. They solved it by digging up an ordinary incident in Morrow's past. As a young, smooth-talking salesman, he had engaged in a clandestine romance with a simple young farm girl. When Morrow deserted her, her puritanical father learned of the forbidden romance and whipped the girl.

The idea of converting ordinary incidents into exotic symbols had tremendous possibilities. One had only to take, for example the number of days Morrow had known the girl, and insert them into the dream, and one had an exotic symbol of why sixteen lashes.

Simon and Kirby quickly recognized the story potential of the world of dreams. The Clark's became the prototype for Richard Temple, Dream Detective, and Morrow's story, "The Scorn of the Faceless People!" became the model for an entirely new book, "The Strange World of Your Dreams."

In the earliest and best issues of Black Magic, Simon & Kirby drew two of the stories and the cover. For example, in the same issue as the Morrow tale, S&K produced "The Cloak," a tale of a garment fashioned by Satan which brings violent death to any who wears it.

Most of the other artists who worked on Black Magic were competent story tellers, but rather unexciting. An exception was a frequent Simon & Kirby co-worker, Mort Meskin. Although Meskin could be disasterous inking Kirby's pencils, he was himself a brilliant penciller. His story telling style, built around medium shots, was as simple and direct as his inks, which were bold and powerful. Meskin had a particular mastery of composition and perspective, which gave his work the same sort of depth Kirby achieved through exaggeration and forced perspectives. Meskin was at his chilling best in telling simple stories with a chilling twist. It could be "The Cheerful Old Lady in Black," a lady named "Miss Smiles" who gives a rain-soaked lad a lift and turns out to be Death, on her way to pick up the boy's parents. Or, consider "A Curse On You," about Gideon Hodges, a nasty little man who can make people drop dead simply by wishing it.

An artist who sometimes collaborated with Meskin also soloed in several Black Magic Appearances. His name? Jerry Robinson, an integral part of the team that made Batman the sensation of the forties. Robinson's stories were well-illustrated, but usually unexciting.

Kirby's interest in were-beings was often apparent. In Black Magic #3, for example, he and Simon produced an 11 page story about a beautiful, silver-haired girl who became a white wolf, eventually shot by her lover. The basic story has been done many times, most recently perhaps by Reed Crandall in the pages of Warren Publications, but never more beautifully then Simon and Kirby drew it. Another were-tale was issue #27's "The Cat People." In this tale, a traveller in Spain visits with some gypsies. Not ordinary gypsies - satanists who play cat's cradle and are themselves transformed into scratching, clawing, satanic beasts. Kirby also used cat-people in his famous Captain 3-D series, and resumed the theme twenty years later when he introduced his Kamandi book.

That same issue carried an interesting tale of murder, paradox, and time travel, entitled "A Hole In His Head". The art is unsigned. In issue #29, the same artist has a tale entitled "Madame Cyanide and Mister Tricks," about one Nicholas Dana, who exposes phoney mediums. Sort of Black Magic's answer to Terence Thirteen. The withered old women, the mist shrouded mansions, the distinctive inks and emphasis on hand gestures and facial expression leave no doubt as to the artist's identity: it is Steve Ditko!

In spite of such treats as Ditko appearances, the overall quality of Black Magic was dropping, as Simon & Kirby drew only covers, and short interior stories. The lead story invariably carried the box "produced by Simon & Kirby," although many times it might, with equal veracity have proclaimed "produced by Cecil B. DeMille."

Some of the stories have acquired a retrospective interest. One such story is "As Real As Life" a lackluster production in a lackluster issue, Black Magic #24. A man buys a picture at an auction of belongings owned by a man who is reputed to be a sorcerer. The man's daughter claims to play in the picture. The father scoffs, but when his daughter disappears he asks the auctioneer, "didn't you say everything in that house was exorcised?"

He replies, "Everything but the picture you bought! On the day the house was purified, the picture wasn't there. It had been taken away to be repaired!"

So what? Well, make the picture a mirror, jazz up the story a bit, and have it illustrated by the talented Alexander Toth, and you have "The Devil's Doorway" in House of Mystery #182, published sixteen years after the Black Magic tale. You see, it isn't only artists who swipe!

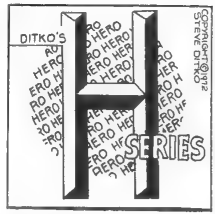
Simon and Kirby left. EC died. But Black Magic continued into the sixties. Why? Who knows? Certainly not on the strength of covers, scripts, or even art, which occasionally featured unsigned art by familiar artists.

The stories never got better, though at the very end of Black Magic's life, they had switched from tales of the supernatural to 3rd rate science fiction yarns. The "saving grace" of the magazine's dying days was the acquisition of illustrator S. Robert Powell, of Mr. Mystic, Sheena, Queen of The Jungle and Man in Black called Fate fame. Powell filled the book with his competent story telling and his wonderfully expressive homely faces.

One such book was Black Magic Vol 8, No. 4. (Sept-Oct. 1961) This book had Powell stories from cover to cover. The first story, "Caged," dealt with an idea Marvel Comics used many times in their pre-super hero days...the changing of places between human and caged animal. In this case, gorillas from another planet captured two circus owners and put them on display on their planet. The next story, "The Monster," also dealt with a much used theme...an alien coming to earth to eliminate all disease and is mistakenly attacked as a monster.

The other three stories in that issue were "The Companion," "The Carrier," and "Earth's Core." They were fairly original in their presentation and dealt with a robot problem on earth, a plague carrier in the year 2032 and a mining machine. None of these stories, as you can see, had anything to do with Black Magic.

Black Magic finally faded from the newstands. Nobody missed it, but if its return at D.C. means a return to the Simon & Kirby fare of the earliest issues, a number of people will welcome its return.



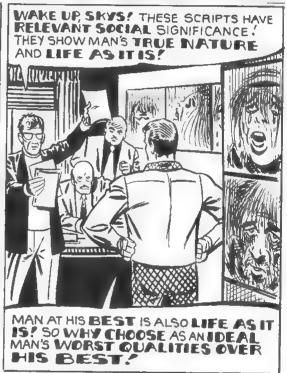
HERO:
ANY PERSON ADMIRED FOR HIS QUALITIES OR ACHIEVEMENTS AND REGARDED AS AN IDEAL OR MODEL.

MAN:
A **RATIONAL** ANIMAL.

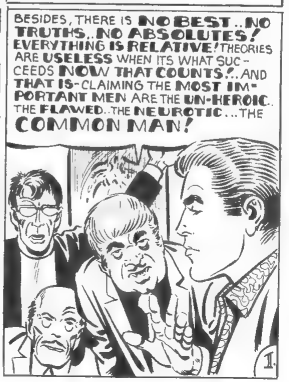
PART I. QUALITIES UNDER ATTACK!

NOW SHOWING
BOLD HEROES
AND INTRODUCING
D. SKYS
D. SKYS could become one of the GREATS, if he gets away from the childish heroic themes - this hang-up of the GOOD GUY VS. the BAD is not only poor Art.. it's BAD MORALITY!
Newcomer, D. SKYS, is a major talent. But he needs modern drama to fulfill his potential. Let's see him in a film of LIFE AS IT IS!
BOY! I WANT TO BE LIKE HIM.. DOING SOMETHING GREAT!
HE MAKES LIFE EXCITING.. IMPORTANT!
AH! ITS NOT FOR REAL! ..GUYS A SHOW OFF.. A TROUBLE-MAKER!
SIGN THE CONTRACT D, AND WE'LL MAKE YOU A BIG STAR IN FINE MOVIES!

WHAT IS THIS? EVERY SCRIPT IS ABOUT MAN AT HIS WORST.. ALL MEN ARE CORRUPT OR NEUROTIC WITH SUFFERING THE ONLY THEME OF LIFE!
IF THE BAD, FAILURE AND MISERY ARE POSSIBLE.. WHY NOT ALSO THE GOOD, SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS?
I DON'T WANT TO MAKE MOVIES THAT REJECT LIFE AS A POSITIVE VALUE!


WAKE UP, SKYS! THESE SCRIPTS HAVE IRRELEVANT SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE! THEY SHOW MAN'S TRUE NATURE AND LIFE AS IT IS!
MAN AT HIS BEST IS ALSO LIFE AS IT IS! SO WHY CHOOSE AS AN IDEAL MAN'S WORST QUALITIES OVER HIS BEST!

NOW THE TREND IS TOWARD ANTI-HEROES! PEOPLE ARE INSULTED BY ANY IDEAL THEY CAN'T REACH.. SO HEROES HAVE TO BE BROUGHT DOWN.. TO BE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE... FLAWED! VIEWERS NEED TO IDENTIFY WITH WEAKNESS - NOT WITH STRENGTH!


BESIDES, THERE IS NO BEST.. NO TRUTHS.. NO ABSOLUTES! EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE! THEORIES ARE USELESS WHEN ITS WHAT SUCCEEDS NOW THAT COUNTS!.. AND THAT IS - CLAIMING THE MOST IMPORTANT MEN ARE THE UN-HEROIC. THE FLAWED.. THE NEUROTIC... THE COMMON MAN!

COME OFF IT! IT WAS THE EXCEPTIONAL MEN WHO SLOWLY BROUGHT MANKIND FORWARD WITH KNOWLEDGE, THEORIES AND SCIENCE - ABOUT ELECTRICITY, SOUND AND PHOTOGRAPHY!

OTHER "UNCOMMON" MEN APPLIED THE SCIENCE - DEVELOPED TECHNOLOGY, PRODUCING LIGHTS, SOUND RECORDINGS AND CAMERAS! THEN STILL OTHER "UNCOMMON MEN ORGANIZED IT ALL INTO A BUSINESS!

THIS INDUSTRY IS A RESULT OF A LONG HISTORY OF THE EFFORTS OF MEN AT THEIR BEST! TO USE THE PRODUCTS OF THE BEST TO GLAMOURIZE MEN AT THEIR WORST IS USING REASON TO GLAMOURIZE IRRATIONALITY!

LOOK! I'LL PLAY ANY ROLE .. AS LONG AS SOME IROLE SHOWS A MAN AT HIS BEST! BUT I WON'T JOIN THOSE WHO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF THE BEST OR ITS IMPORTANCE IN HUMAN LIFE!

THAT'S ALL BESIDE THE POINT! YOU'RE UNDER EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT! YOUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO ACT FOR US OR NEVER ACT AGAIN!

THINK IT OVER! WE HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE YOU OR BREAK YOU! GET USED TO THE FACT OF LIFE THAT WHATEVER WE OR THE PUBLIC WANT .. YOU'LL USE YOUR ABILITIES TO GET IT ACROSS! WE DECIDE, YOU JUST FOLLOW AND OBEY!

WELL, BROTHER, YOUR STUNT IS ALL OVER TOWN. YOU ALMOST BLEW IT! THE STUDIO IS LIKE CITY HALL.D.. YOU CAN'T FIGHT THEM .. AND WIN!

BUT UNLESS I DO FIGHT - I CAN'T WIN! TO ME, ED, IT'S WORTH IT!

SKY'S COSTUME PROPS Rental

D. TAKE IT FROM ME, I'VE BEEN THROUGH IT! I ALSO TRIED TO STAND UP FOR NOBLE PRINCIPLES AND GOT THE WORST OF IT EVERYTIME! YOU EITHER BEND WITH POWER OR YOU GET BROKEN!

COMPROMISE! PLAY ALONG WITH THEM.. BUT TAKE - GRAB - CHISEL ALL THE FAME, MONEY AND POWER YOU CAN! HAVING IT IS WHAT COUNTS! I SHOULD'VE HAD IT .. YOU CAN GET IT ALL! DON'T LOSE THIS CHANCE FOR ANYTHING!

GET IT INTO YOUR HEAD, D.. COMPROMISE IS THE ONLY WAY.. NOT JUST TO GET TO THE TOP-BUT TO SURVIVE!
BUT IF I SELL-OUT-WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME?
ALL THAT MATTERS IS THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO BE SOME.. BODY BIG!
BY BLIND-ING MYSELF?
OKAY, D., YOU'LL HAVE TO LEARN THE HARD WAY! KEEP YOUR IDEALS AND WIND UP A CLEAR-EYED NOBODY!
NOW WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?
..STUDYING.. THEY'LL COME AROUND WITH A BETTER SCRIPT!
..SO D. SKYS KEEPS IMPROVING HIS SKILLS AND ABILITIES, WIDENING HIS
UNDERSTANDING OF MAN AND HIS WORLD, PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THE DAY WHEN
HE WILL BE CALLED ON TO PERFORM.. TO BE READY..TO BE AT HIS BEST!
LECTURES
I COME!
VIEW A. TRUE-FALSE ? PROOF!
VIEW B. ?
I THOUGHT THEY'D SEND ME AN IMPROVED SCRIPT BY NOW!? THIS WAITING CAN BECOME IRRITAITING!
I'M LIKE A PRIZE FIGHTER IN TRAINING BUT WITH NO FIGHT SCHEDULED!.. AT TIMES, IT ALL SEEMS LIKE A WASTE..SENSELESS..
..IS IT?..NO! WHATEVER HAPPENS..SOMEDAY, I WILL ACT AGAIN! I'M PREPAIRING FOR THAT DAY!
RELAX! D. IS A PRISONER OF HIS OWN PASSION FOR ACTING! HIS BEING PRACTICAL AND WORKING WILL WIN OVER HEROIC IDEALS THAT MEAN UNEMPLOYMENT!.. AND ONCE HE RENOUNCES HIS PRINCIPLES, HE'LL NEVER AGAIN GIVE US ANY TROUBLE!
3.

YOU GUYS WHO DON'T PAY GAMBLING DEBTS ARE A LOW FORM OF..PHEW.. THIS JOINT NEEDS AN AIRING!
..SPOT! I'LL HAVE THE MONEY IN A FEW DAYS.. HONEST..
LYING AGAIN! BOYS, HE NEEDS A LESSON! AAGHH!..WHY DON'T YOU CLEAN THIS FILTHY PLACE.. IT'S UNHEALTHY!
NO,SPOT, PLEASE!
WATCH OUT! DIRT! YOU TRYING TO INFECT ME!
..ANTISEPTIC PILLS.. HURRY!...GIMME A CLEAN SCARF.. DIS-CENFECT THE FOUL AIR AROUND ME..DIRT..
YOU FILTHY SLOB, MAKING ME COME TO THIS GERM HOLE FOR NOTHING? GIMME A CLEAN GLOVE!
IF I HAVE TO COME BACK TO THIS FILTH..I'LL BURN IT DOWN-WITH YOU IN IT! I WANT THAT 3 GRAND..
..TO MORROW AFTER-NOON!
AAAAGHH! GET THESE DIRTY PAPERS OFF ME!
..GET OFF ALL THE DIRT SPRAY MY CLOTHES... HURRY!..I FEEL THAT FILTH SMOTHERING ME!
DIRT'S ALL GONE, SPOT!
MAKE SURE! DON'T MISS ANY SPOTS!
I'D DO ANYTHING TO GET OUT OF BEING EXPOSED TO DIRT AND FILTH!
PLAY IT SAFE. SPRAY ALL OVER ME!
WHY DIDN'T YOU PARK CLOSER! KEEP SPRAYING UNTIL I'M IN-SIDE!
I'VE GOT TO GET TO BE A BIG BOSS.. HAVE A CLEAN PROTECTED IN-SIDE LIFE!

NOTHING HAPPENED.. AN ACCIDENT.. SO DROP IT!
ED'S IN SOME KIND OF TROUBLE AGAIN!..
D. COULDN'T AFFORD ANOTHER LOAN..STILL OWE HIM FOR MY SHARE IN SETTING UP THIS BUSINESS!..+0 IF HE HAD ONLY GIVEN IN TO THE STUDIO.
ED'S VISITORS PLAYED ROUGH! ..."TOMORROW AFTERNOON!"?! I'LL ALSO BE HERE! NOW I GOT TO GET TO THAT LECTURE!
BUT HE HAD TO BE PIG-HEADED!
...SOB...IT IS NO USE.. WHY BOTHER...LIFE IS EVIL..SYSTEM IS ROTTEN..WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE CARE..LOVE ME..NEVER HAD A CHANCE..OTHERS TO BLAME..SELFISH... I TRIED..CAN'T HELP BEING THE WAY I AM.. NO CHOICE..WHY CAN'T I HAVE MY WAY..SOB.. WHY ME..SOB...
I FEEL HUMBLE MAKING SUCH A PROFOUND SOCIAL MOVIE!
CUT! BEAUTIFUL! THAT'S TELLING LIFE THE WAY IT IS!
THAT WAS TO BE D.'S ROLE! CURSE HIS ARROGANT SELFISHNESS! WITH HIS FAVORABLE REVIEWS AND OUR RELEVANT THEME, THIS FILM COULD OF BEEN A FINANCIAL, SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC SUCCESS!
BUT D.'S ATTITUDE IS ANTI-HUMANITARIAN! DUTY, SELF SACRIFICE TO OTHERS NEEDS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OBSESSION ABOUT SELFISH, PERSONAL CONCERN! TRUE HEROISM IS NOT INDIVIDUAL BUT SOCIALLY ORIENTED, A COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENT!
STILL WE'VE GOT TO USE D. SKYS SOON! LET'S OFFER HIM OUR BEST STORY-OR "THE GREY THEORY"! IF HE REFUSES IT..I'LL SEE HIM RUINED! HE'LL LEARN NO ONE MAN CAN OPPOSE OUR COMMON GOOD... AND GET AWAY WITH IT!
ALMOST WASN'T IN TIME!
PLEASE...TELL SPOT A CHECK'S DUE....TOMORROW! I SWEAR...
SPOT SAID YOU PAY NOW OR WE WRECK YOU AND THIS STINKING PLACE!
NO, PLEASE, ONE MOR-OOF!
...THOSE SUB-HUMANS! I CAN'T JUST RUSH IN THERE... TO HELP ED, I NEED AN EDGE.. SOMETHING TO SHAKE THEM UP..WAIT!..YAH!..
..MY IDEA BETTER WORK.. A QUICK CHANGE..
5.

AAAARRGGH
..WHAT'S THAT?!
..IT..IT'S FROM BACK HERE...AAAHH!
I'LL GET WHOEVER OOOOOOFFF..
SEE HOW WELL I PRACTISE YOUR "LANGUAGE OF FORCE" BROTHER BARBAIRIANS!
COME MENTAL DEGENERATES, LET US REASON TOGETHER!
GET THAT.. AAAHH!
HEY!..NO! ..WAIT..
..GOT TO KEEP PRESSING..
..DON'T GIVE THEM A CHANCE...
..TO RECOVER THEIR WITS..
..OR GET OFF THE DEFENSIVE!
JUST LEAVE THEM ONE OUT...
..TO GET OUT OF HERE!

..AND STAY OUT!
..TROUBLE'S OVER, ED. YOU CAN PAY THEM OFF TOMORROW!
YOU FOOL! EVEN IF I CAN..NOW WE'RE BOTH IN WORSE TROUBLE!
THEY'LL BE BACK-WANTING YOU! I'LL BE FORCED TO EXPOSE YOU! THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR EITHER ONE OF US!..STUPID HEROICS..
THEY WOULDN'T?.. YES... THAT KIND WOULD!
SO WE TURN IT OVER TO THE LAW..
YOU CRAZY! NO POLICE! ..I'LL DENY EVERYTHING!.. YOU'RE ASKING TO GET US KILLED!
SPOT IS A NUT! WE'RE LIKE GERMS TO HIM!..CALL THE POLICE AND FOR SURE..SPOT WOULD KILL US!
SO WE JUST WAIT, AND TAKE WHATEVER THAT SICK BUNCH WANTS TO DO TO US!
IF WE BREAK THEIR RACKET, WITHOUT THEM KNOWING WHO DID IT?
IT CAN'T BE DONE! I WANT NO PART OF IT!
"NO PART" YOU MADE SPOT AND HIS RACKET POSSIBLE BY DEALING WITH HIM..YOU FEED HIM...NOW YOU WANT TO PROTECT HIM..SO HE'S FREE TO HURT US! IF NO POLICE, THEN IT IS UP TO US! TELL ME ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT SPOT KLEANER!
..I...I didn't want it to come to THIS!..
..AND THAT'S ALL I KNOW!
ITS ENOUGH!.. NOW HOW TO GET SPOT TO GIVE UP HIS RECORDS? ..WHAT IF..
..YES!..ITS THE EDGE I NEED TO PUT SPOT ON THE SPOT!..A VERY SPECIAL COSTUME!
DON'T MAKE IT WORSE D. GIVE IT UP!
STOP ASKING ME TO GIVE UP MY LIFE!
7.

..BUT, BOSS...I..I WASN'T THERE..YA..SKYS' MY RE-SPONSIBILITY..BUT..BUT..
..AFRAID TO GET DIRTY SPOT? MAYBE I SHOULD TRANSFER YOU BACK TO THE SLUM.. HANDLING DRUNKS? NO MORE EXCUSES...JUST DELIVER..OR ELSE!
ALRIGHT, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO!.. FOUL UP AND YOU'RE DEAD!..
..WINDING UP ALWAYS BEING EXPOSED-SUFFOCATING IN FILTH...NO!.. BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, I'VE GOT TO PROTECT MY JOB FOR GOOD!
LET'S GO! I'LL DO THE WORK, YOU STAND BY.. A LOOKOUT!
PLEASE, D. DON'T... LOOK, MAYBE I CAN STILL TALK TO SPOT.. OFFER HIM A BONUS.. I'M SURE HE'LL LISTEN TO REASON!
REASON IS WHAT MAKES MAN AT HIS BEST POSSIBLE! WAS REASON EVER A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR SPOT! YOU READY TO GO TO THE POLICE?... NO!
YOU REFUSE TO ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR TROUBLE OR FOR CLEARING IT UP! SOMEHOW IT ALL HAPPEND-SOMEHOW IT WILL BE CLEARED UP! BUT A SOMEHOW ALWAYS MEANS ...A SOMEBODY!
I..I can't help it..I can't...
I'M GOING TO TRY THIS.. WITH OR WITHOUT YOU!
OKAY, YOU TWO...JUST HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
NEXT ISSUE
THE CONCLUSION!
8.

From the Circular File

WELL ANOTHER ISSUE OF COMIC CRUSADER COMES TO A CLOSE. I HOPE YOU ENJOYED IT! THE ILLUSTRATION IN THE UPPER RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THIS PAGE IS BY SPANISH ARTIST, CARLOS GIMENEZ. YOU REGULAR READERS MIGHT REMEMBER HIS BIOGRAPHY FEATURED IN C.C. #12. I'M INDEBTED TO COMIC CRUSADER'S EUROPEAN "FOREIGN-FAN FARE" EDITOR, JOHN MANSFIELD, FOR OBTAINING IT FOR ME. ALSO THANKS TO BRUCE PATTERSON FOR HIS HUMOROUS CARTOON WITH THE IMPORTANT MESSAGE...WRITE! REMEMBER YOU CAN'T HAVE A LETTER COLUMN WITHOUT LETTERS!!! SPEAKING OF MAIL, LET'S DIP INTO THE CIRCULAR FILE AND SEE HOW YOU LIKED LAST ISSUE.

MARK LUCKE
211 East Cleveland Street
Beeville, Texas. 78102

I'm not much for colorful LOC's, as you might have surmised if you've seen some of the poorer letters I've had printed in various National comics. Then again, sometimes my critiques come off halfway decently. At any rate, I couldn't resist sending you a line or two of my opinion of Comic Crusader #13. Steranko's cover, needless to say, was awe-inspiring. He certainly has a way with interpreting the female figure! I enjoyed the Defender strip, even though I hadn't seen its opening segments. I'm sure you know your work is as good as many a pro's, and, as a reader previously commented, your inkstyle is unique.
I can't say the story itself was all that original, but again, it easily measured up to much of today's professional work.
Tom Fagan's "05701" was okay; I'm not actually that fond of book reviews, but there Tom managed to pull it off in such a way that it did seem worth the time it took to read it.
The Staton interview was perhaps the most worthwhile presentation in the issue. I don't know much about Charlton's creative staff, so, naturally, I found the article interesting.
Finally, Steve Ditko's Mr. A strip proved indeed to be interesting and provoking. Kudos to Steve for this strip.
I did miss the presence of "Comic Chatter"...I'm kind of partial to newszines, and I hope this feature will return next issue.

I THANK YOU FOR THINKING MY WORK IS AS GOOD AS A PRO'S. IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO KNOW SOMEONE APPRECIATES WHAT YOU'RE DOING. AS FOR THE DEFENDER STORY NOT BEING ORIGINAL... THERE I HAVE TO DISAGREE!!! I MAY SWIPE ART ON OCCASION, BUT NOT STORY LINES. THAT CONCLUSION TO THE DEFENDER STORY WAS A LONG THOUGHT OUT PIECE OF WORK. IT TOOK QUITE A FEW ISSUES TO MAKE ALL THE PIECES FIT. THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND COMIC CRUSADER IS THE REVIEW OF COMIC HEROES FROM THE PAST. TOM FAGAN IS TOPS AT THIS TYPE OF INFORMATIVE ARTICLE. I HOPE THAT HE WINS THE BEST FAN WRITER AWARD THIS YEAR, IN DON & MAGGIE THOMPSON'S "COMIC ART FAN AWARDS." HE CERTAINLY DESERVES IT! I HOPE YOU LIKED STEVE DITKO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THIS ISSUE, AS MUCH AS HIS MR. A SERIES. I PUT IN "COMIC CHATTER" WHENEVER I HAVE NEWS TO DIVULGE ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS IN C.C., OR BITS OF COMIC BOOK NOSTALGIA. IT'S SORT OF A SEMI-REGULAR FEATURE.

LAURINE WHITE
4908 Leader Avenue
Sacramento, Calif. 95841

Comic Crusader #13 certainly had beautiful covers; the solid black areas are so effective. Gil Kane's back cover is similar to his Warlock cover on a recent MMMC.
Between the covers, The Defender was better than anything else! The art on that strip was superb, magnificent, etc. I really like your artwork and the Wally Wood offset you give it.
Tom Fagan's article was overwritten. It is fine to wax glorious (or something) on heroes of the Golden Age, but Captain Atom in 1967? I just didn't understand what was happening there. He should have mentioned a few of the villains and battles from Lady Luck, "13", and especially The Black Cat. The paragraph on Trigger Burke was only a start on what the article needed to enliven it.
Joe Staton's picture was too cluttered. It should have been of Primus. After all, he was Primus' artist. Too much propagandizing in the Ditko story. And somewhere in a paragraph in issue #13, you should have put in some information about yourself. How is your child? Especially how are your eye operations progressing? Don't you think that we fans care? Please say something about these things in Comic Crusader #14!

TOM'S ARTICLE WAS FAR FROM BEING OVERWRITTEN! CAPT. ATOM WAS INCLUDED BECAUSE OF THE CHARACTER HE FOUGHT IN THE ISSUE REFERED TO..."13" AND FAUSTUS. THE ARTICLE WAS ON 13 OR LUCK ORIENTED CHARACTERS YOU KNOW. TOM ONLY TOUCHED ON EACH CHARACTER - GIVING THE FLAVOR OF EACH. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE THE WHOLE HISTORY OF EACH CHARACTER. IF TOM HAD DONE THAT, THEN THE ARTICLE WOULD HAVE BEEN OVERWRITTEN, AS IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE WHOLE ISSUE TO DO IT. HOWEVER, TOM HAS PROMISED TO DO A COMPLETE LADY LUCK ARTICLE, AT SOME FUTURE DATE. I, LIKE YOU, FOUND THAT PART OF TOM'S "13" ORIENTED ARTICLE EXTREMELY INTERESTING! ALL THE MR. A STORIES SHOW GOOD AND EVIL TO AN EXTREME, WITH EMPHASIS ON A MORAL POINT. IT JUST WOULDN'T BE MR. A WITHOUT THESE ELEMENTS. I DON'T OFTEN TALK ABOUT MYSELF IN C.C., BECAUSE IT'S A PUBLICATION ABOUT COMICS, NOT THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF MARTIN L. GREIM. IF SOMETHING REALLY GREAT HAPPENS TO ME, THEN I'LL SOMETIMES INCLUDE IT IN AN ISSUE. HOWEVER, SINCE YOU ASKED...MY DAUGHTER JOLENE IS FINE! SHE WILL BE 2 YEARS OLD IN APRIL AND JUST ENJOYED A FANTASTIC XMAS! MY EYES ARE SLIGHTLY WORSE. THE CONDITION CAN NOT BE CURED OR IMPROVED AND I'M TOLD WILL RESULT IN EVENTUAL BLINDNESS. HOWEVER, THAT MAY NOT HAPPEN FOR YEARS AND I TRY TO THINK IN THE POSITIVE ON THIS MATTER. I THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN!

JAMES BRANDON
Rt. #2
Rector, Ark. 72461

I was very surprised to open my mailbox and find C.C. #13 inside! You don't put out C.C. very often, but they are always welcome when you do.
You've had some weird covers for your last two issues.

I have never seen art of this style come from Steranko before. I must say it was very good!
The Defender finally returns! Since issue #8 I've wondered just what was going to happen. Your art wasn't quite as good in #13's saga as it was in #8's. So, the Defender and the Ruler know each other. Well, that figures. That shot of Surrette on the Time Probe platform was the best in the whole zine. I don't suppose there is anyway you can bring back the Defender. To my notion, he is the best character in fandom. Today, when the amateur superhero is on the way out, I welcome his return. I don't think you could replace him with another character.
I liked "05701" by Tom Fagan. The full page Bill Black illustration helped put it on its feet. The best character analysis (?) was Two-Face. I would liked to have seen more of Thirteen and Faustus, from the Capt. Atom story.
The Man Behind The First Man of the Sea was better than last issue's interview. I didn't know anything about Staton until I read this interview. His long answers were really quite informative.
Mr. A was very good. The first page was best. It really characterized our "great" country. After that first page however, I don't agree with Ditko on his philosophy. He seems to think that to be good you have to be perfect. I'm certainly not perfect, but I don't consider myself evil, which seems to be Ditko's way of thinking.
Gil Kane's back cover was received much better than last issues back cover. This is the first Kane art I've liked in two years.
Oh yeah, tell Ronn Foss I like his long underwear heroes. If he won't do any more Eclipse stories (*Note See C.C. #12) maybe you could talk him into letting you do the strip. Also, when will we see Fandom's Finest again?

YOU DON'T THINK I CAN BRING THE DEFENDER BACK, EH! WELL JAMES, YOU'RE WRONG! I LEFT AN ESCAPE CLAUSE IN THE STORY. HIS FATE DEPENDS ON TWO THINGS... FIRST - HOW MY SIGHT HOLDS UP. SECOND - MY OWN FEELINGS ON WHETHER I WANT TO DO A SEQUEL OR NOT. I WOULD NEVER ATTEMPT TO DRAW THE ECLIPSE. TO MY WAY OF THINKING, RONN FOSS IS THE ONLY ARTIST FOR THAT CHARACTER!

EVAN GEORGE
105 Upper Mtn. Ave.
Montclair, New Jersey. 07042

Having ordered and recieved Comic Crusader #12 and #13 I am completely delighted with both, but #12 especially. I was in Spain for 6 months and became a great fan of Carlos Gimenez and his Delta 99. I have collected the Delta 99 books from issue #1 to #27 (May 1971). Esteban Moroto's strip "5 for Infinity" ran through the first 20 issues and has just recently come out in Madrid in large Life Magazine size books in color (Spring '72). The title of the book is Dracula. The coloring is bad and it wipes out any nice lines Moroto had. Earlier Dracula issues, which featured Moroto's "Wolf" and artists such as Enric Sio and Jose Bea, are quite beautiful. Bright colors and drawn in Pop style. Moroto is very good here.
Spain is quite good for comics. A book called Trinca is especially well done. A strip called Manos Kelly is simply without peer in the realm of adventure-westerns. In terms of concept, art (the color is incredibly beautiful) action, suspense, violence, etc it is the most fullfilling and enjoyable strip I have ever read. The artist only signs as AHP. He is a maestro and deserving of the greatest renown.
By the way Gimenez's "Dani Futuro" also can be found in the Spanish "Tin-Tin". A truly fine work. Trinca, though, is the premier comic-zine and has the entire range of strips, from detective to adventure to sword and sorcery to Yellow Submarine type stories.
I thought you might be interested in this information.

NOT ONLY AM I INTERESTED IN YOUR INFORMATION, I'M SURE MANY OF MY READERS WILL BE TOO. BY NOW, IF YOU BUY THE WARREN PUB. MAGAZINES AT ALL, YOU MUST KNOW THAT WARREN IS REPRINTING ALL THOSE OLD DRACULA BOOKS (FEATURING WOLF) IN A $5.00 COLLECTION VOLUME. THE DRACULA BOOKS ARE ALSO BEING REPRINTED IN ENGLAND BY THE - NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY, BARNARD'S INN, HOLBORN, LONDON, E.C. 1, ENGLAND. THESE BOOKS ARE NOT IN A COLLECTION, LIKE WARREN'S, BUT ARE IN THEIR 24 PAGE ORIGINAL FORMAT...BEAUTIFUL COVERS AND ALL! YOU EVEN GET A FREE MOROTO POSTER WITH THE FIRST ISSUE. I'M COLLECTING THE WHOLE SET INSTEAD OF BUYING WARREN'S $5.00 VERSION. I'D LIKE TO SEE SOME OF GIMENEZ'S WORK PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES. HE'S TOPS, IN MY BOOK!

IT'S TIME TO CLOSE NOW, BUT BEFORE I GO I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU SOME INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING AND ART CONTRIBUTIONS. YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE, BUT FOR 2 ISSUES IN ADVANCE ONLY! WHEN YOUR SUBSCRIPTION RUNS OUT, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED ON THE FLAP OF C.C.'S ENVELOPE. SUBSCRIPTION RATE IS $1.50 FOR 2 ISSUES!
ART AND WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME! KEEP IN MIND THAT THE WORK MUST BE AS GOOD, OR BETTER, THAN WHAT IS NOW APPEARING IN C.C. FOR WRITTEN WORK I PREFER RESEARCHED ARTICLES OR WELL DONE INTERVIEWS. I HAVE NO REAL USE FOR SHORT STORIES.
WELL, UNTIL NEXT TIME, STAY WELL! BEST - MLG

COMING NEXT ISSUE!

COMIC CRUSADER (15)

Featuring..."Great Comic Conflicts!" The first in a series of articles relating and analyzing the outstanding comic book battles between good and evil. Part 2 of STEVE DITKO's "H" Series. An interview you won't want to miss and some great art and writing to boot! All this, and other features for your reading enjoyment, for only 75¢. Don't miss out!

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